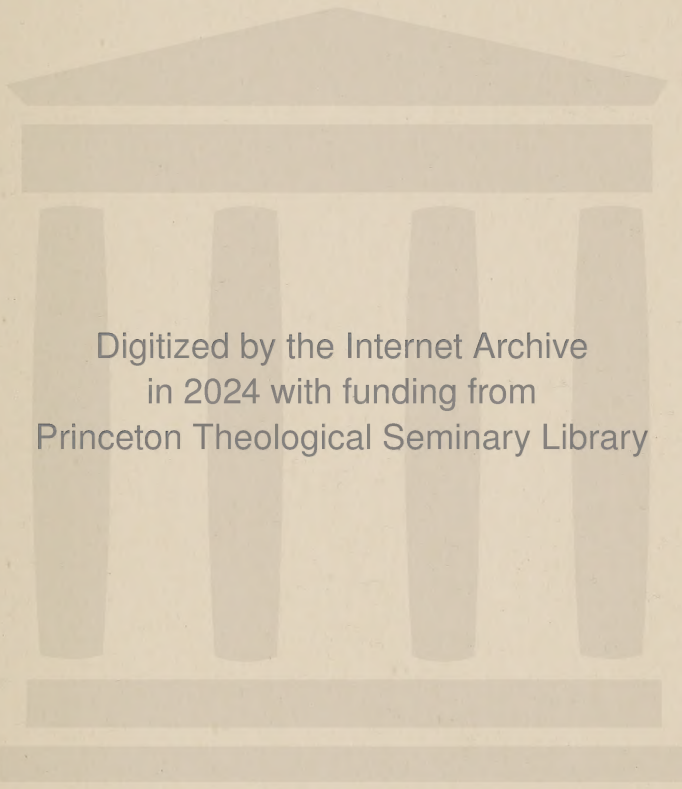
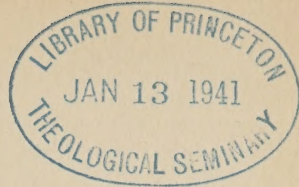


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The Reverend Colonel Finch



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THE REVEREND COLONEL FINCH



THE REVEREND COLONEL FINCH

BY ELIZABETH NITCHIE



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P R E F A C E

WHEN I WAS ASKED two years ago what I knew about Colonel Calicot Finch and the reasons why Mary Shelley and Claire Clairmont disliked him, I could only answer that I knew nothing except what is to be found in two letters from Mary to Mrs. Gisborne and a few other printed references to him as the author of a letter on the death of Keats. But acting on a hint from Mr. R. H. Hill, Secretary of the Bodleian Library, that in the first part of the nineteenth century the University of Oxford had been the beneficiary of a man named Robert Finch, I began to explore the Finch Collection in Bodley. An examination of the manuscript journals and correspondence books in this collection soon showed that Colonel Calicot Finch and Robert Finch were one man—an interesting man, a “character,” as Crabb Robinson called him, with interesting friends. I explored further. The search led me to other parts of Oxford University: to the Ashmolean Museum, to Balliol College, to the office of the University Chest, to the library and even to the basement of the Taylor Institution. It led me to Somerset House and to the Dr. Williams Library in London, to the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. This book is the result of my investigations.

My thanks and acknowledgments are due to many institutions and individuals for aid and for numerous courtesies: to the Curators of the Taylor Institution for permission to photograph and to print the photograph of the busts of Robert Finch and Thomas Finch; to the

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Curators of the Bodleian Library for permission to examine and quote from the reserved Shelley manuscripts as well as to make use of the Finch manuscripts; to the Dr. Williams Library and its librarian, Mr. Stephen K. Jones, for permission to examine and to quote from the Henry Crabb Robinson manuscripts; to the Director and Secretary of the Victoria and Albert Museum for information about their copy of Severn's "Ariel"; to Signorina Vera Signorelli, Curator of the Keats Shelley Memorial in Rome, and Mr. Ion Munro, Secretary of the Keats Shelley Memorial Committee in Rome, for photographs of Finch's tomb; to Mr. R. A. B. Mynors, Librarian, and Mr. B. H. Sumner, both of Balliol College, for information about the silver plate which Finch bequeathed to Balliol; to Dr. K. T. Parker, Keeper of the Department of Fine Art, and Dr. J. G. Milne, Deputy Keeper of Coins in the Ashmolean Museum, for information about the pictures and coins in the Finch Collection; to Professor Cesare Foligno, of Magdalen College, Oxford, for information about the Mayer family and for making inquiries for me about their papers in Italy; and to many friends and colleagues who have given me criticism and advice. I am especially grateful to Mr. R. H. Hill, Secretary of the Bodleian Library, and to Dr. L. F. Powell, Librarian of the Taylor Institution; they have both done me many favors, and they have constantly encouraged and facilitated my work in every way possible.

E. N.

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
AUGUST 15, 1940

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Busts of Robert Finch (by William Ewing) and of Thomas Finch (by Joseph Nollekens); photographed by permission of the curators of the Taylor Institution.

TOMB OF ROBERT FINCH IN THE PROTESTANT CEMETERY, ROME 64

Photographed by Mr. Ion Munro.

I. PARSON AND COLONEL

AT THE TOP of the main path leading from the entrance of the Protestant Cemetery in Rome, not far from the grave of Shelley with its simple slab, stands a tall Gothic monument. Its spire rises against the sky above the Aurelian wall. At the base of the spire a long-robed woman holding a cross points heavenward. On the face of the tomb is an epitaph (see page 2), with two mailed heads above it and a coat of arms below. On the back of the monument is cut a poem of nine indifferent quatrains expressing the lonely widow's sorrow.

In March, 1820, Mary Shelley wrote to Mrs. Gisborne from Pisa:

The other day as Clare & Shelley were walking out they beheld a little dirty blacksmith's boy running away from a tall long legged man running with an umbrella under his arm after him crying *fermatelo fermatelo*—the boy got into a house & cried—son nella mia botega! non tocami! son nella mia botega—Shelley approached & and [*sic*] asked cosa c'è for the tall umbrella gentleman had seized the boy by the collar—He (the tall man) cried “Cercate il governatore—subito cercate il go[verna]tore— “Ma perche? che cosa è?”—“Signor n[on] fa niente che cosa sia—cercate il g[over]natore—subito cercatelo!” & this with the greatest vehemence—a crowd collected—Clare twitched S. & remonstrated—Don Quixote did not like to leave the boy in thrawl but deafened by the tall strider's vociferations & overcome by Clare's importunities he departed—& the[n] Clare out of breath with terror as you may well suppose said “for mercy's sake have nothing to do with those peop[l]e it's the reverend Colonel Calicot Finch.¹

¹ Bodleian MSS Shelley c. 1, ff. 394-95.

EPITAPH ON TOMB OF ROBERT FINCH

HERE LIE THE MORTAL REMAINS
OF THE REV^D ROBERT FINCH M.A. OF BALLIOL COLLEGE OXFORD
DESCENDED FROM THE ANCIENT AND HONOURABLE HOUSE
OF THE EARLS OF WINCHELSEA AND AYLESFORD
HE WAS BORN IN THE CITY OF LONDON DEC XXVII A.D. MDCCLXXXIII
AND GAVE SUCH EARLY PROOFS OF HIGH ABILITIES AND WORTH
AS GAINED HIM THE CONFIDENCE OF PITT
AND THE FRIENDSHIP OF PERCEVAL
UNDER SUCH AUSPICES HE MIGHT HAVE RISEN TO POSTS OF HONOUR
BUT SACRIFICING VIEWS OF AMBITION TO THE LOVE OF KNOWLEDGE
HE TRAVELLED A CONTEMPLATIVE AND DEEP OBSERVER
THROUGH MANY KINGDOMS OF EUROPE AND ASIA
EVERY WHERE SEEKING THE GOOD AND THE LEARNED
EVERY WHERE SOUGHT FOR AND HONOURED BY THEM
IN MDCCCXX HE MARRIED MARIA ELDEST DAUGHTER
OF FREDERICK THOMSON ESQ^R OF KENSINGTON
AND THEN FIXING HIS RESIDENCE AT ROME
DEVOTED HIMSELF TO THE CALM PLEASURES OF A STUDIOUS
AND THE SACRED DUTIES OF A DOMESTIC LIFE
BENEVOLENT GENEROUS AFFECTIONATE SINCERE
NO POOR MAN EVER SOLICITED HIS CHARITY IN VAIN
NO SCHOLAR SOUGHT THAT HE DID NOT DERIVE
NO ARTIST NEEDED THAT HE DID NOT RECEIVE
INSTRUCTION FROM HIS LEARNING
FROM HIS LIBERALITY ASSISTANCE
THUS DEAR TO SOCIETY DEAR TO HIS FRIENDS
DEAR AH! HOW DEAR TO HIS DEVOTED WIFE
HE LIVED A BRIGHT EXAMPLE OF EXCELLENCE
UNTIL IT PLEASED ALMIGHTY GOD TO REMOVE HIM
TOO SOON ALAS! FOR THE HAPPINESS OF OTHERS
FROM A STATE OF TRIAL TO A STATE OF REWARD
IN THE XLVII YEAR OF HIS AGE SEPT. XVI A.D. MDCCCXXX

TO THE MEMORY OF HER REVERED HER BELOVED HUSBAND
HIS WIDOW RAISES THIS SEPULCHRAL MONUMENT
WITH EARNEST SUPPLICATION AND PRAYER
THAT SHE MAY BE ENABLED TO ENDURE THE BITTER GRIEF
INFLECTED BY HIS UNTIMELY DEATH
WITH THE SAME PIETY FAITH AND RESIGNATION
WITH WHICH HE HAD PREPARED HIMSELF TO MEET IT

PARSON AND COLONEL

Irreconcilable as it may seem, the patron of art and letters and the friend of the poor was the same man as the "tall umbrella gentleman" who pursued the little blacksmith's boy through the streets of Pisa. The Reverend Robert Finch, who appears in the serious records of his school, his university, and his family as the "eminent antiquary," is identical with the Reverend Colonel Calicot Finch who bored Byron and Hobbhouse and amused and disgusted the Shelleys. Moreover—and this has been his chief title to fame outside the sober pages of the *Dictionary of National Biography*—he was the Mr. Finch who wrote to John Gisborne the letter on the death of Keats which Gisborne sent to Shelley. But none of the biographers and editors of Shelley and Keats, who have quoted and requoted the letter, has known his identity. There has been, apparently, no clue to lead them from the "Colonel" to the "Antiquary." Even his first name has been hidden, and he has been seriously referred to as "Col. Calicot Finch,"² whereas "Calicot" was merely a nickname given him by the Shelleys.

By the terms of his will Robert Finch's art collection and his books came eventually into the possession of Oxford University. Among his books were manuscript diaries, commonplace books, and seventeen volumes of correspondence, which have heretofore never been explored. From them emerges a picturesque, contradictory figure, wearing both the cloth and the uniform, respected and despised—indeed, respectable and contemptible, lovable and laughable, composer of eloquent sermons and pious journal entries and also inventor of stories that would do credit to any Pyrgopolinices or Captain Bobadil. He elicited from men and women, from English, Ital-

² Shelley, *Works*, Julian ed., X, 336*n*. Finch's letter about Keats is printed here.

ian, French, Swiss, and Greek, letters full of warm friendship, fulsome compliment, genuine respect, of appeals for assistance which, whether financial, scholarly, or artistic, seldom went unanswered, of deep gratitude for advice and patronage, and also occasionally of excoriation for his mendacity—all of which he carefully preserved. Henry Crabb Robinson, who met him in Rome in 1829, spoke of him in letters and diary in terms of sincere liking and expressed a sense of real personal loss at the news of his death. Writing in 1852 his reminiscences of his Italian journey, Robinson describes his meeting with Finch ³ and then, in an unpublished passage, continues:

Of Mr. Finch I must give an account—he was a kind hearted generous & I believe a perfectly upright man, but these good qualities were sadly spoiled by the infirmity I cannot give it a worse name, of braggadocio lyeing. His untruths were the offspring of mere vanity—In my journal written the very day of my forming his acquaintance—I wrote—Mr. F. says he had three fathers—His bodily father, Dr. The Mus. D father of my new acquaintance—Miss *Burney* and *Burke*!!!—And at a later period of our acquaint[an]ce he informed me that *Pitt* solicited him to be his private *Secretary*! . . . This is all the harm I have to say of him—I shall have good to say . . . I will no further anticipate now—Except that I will here add with reference to that same infirmity of lyeing—At a moment when it ought not to have been recollected—that of his death—A Capt. Heely whose daughter afterwards became the wife of the notorious *Dr. Achilli* calling him *Lyar* grossly—I said “Captⁿ H. Mr. F had a strange habit of talking incorrectly but I never heard him utter a word to the disparagement or injury of another or for his own benefit. And tho Wordsworth classes together as if of like

³ Thomas Sadler, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, 3 vols., London, 1869, II, 454.

PARSON AND COLONEL

quality "Malignant truth or lye" I own I think worse of a malignant truth than of a harmless falsehood—" ⁴

Robinson was fortunate in never having heard Finch utter a word of disparagement of another. Frequently in his letters and diaries his always quick temper flares up against the base, cowardly, perfidious wretches and brutes who did not regard him with sufficient deference or who dared to impugn his honesty or question his right to a military title. Yet he himself knew some of his own faults. When he was in quarantine at Leghorn, in 1817, after his return from plague-stricken Constantinople, he wrote in his diary, in a moment of unusual humility and clarity of sight,

I feel very much disturb'd in spirit, and irritable. God grant me more patience and peace of mind. I know that I cherish wrong ideas, but I cannot tear myself from them. I am too apt to be hurt and irritated by trifles; and too prone to quarrel with the world. I ought to learn to pity ignorance and discourteous, nay, even ungenerous, unkind behaviour, rather than be uselessly indignant at it. ⁵

But it is not difficult to imagine that the shoulders of the little blacksmith's boy might have felt the umbrella in the hand of the man who in Greece thrashed the postilions for letting a horse tread on his bridle.

It was, however, engaged in the "infirmity of braggadocio lyeing" that he first appeared to the Shelleys. Mrs. Shelley describes the meeting in a letter to Mrs. Gisborne, who had known Finch at Leghorn and whose husband, at least, if we can judge from his letters, admired and re-

⁴ Dr. Williams Library Robinson MSS, "Reminiscences," 1826-33, ff. 57-59.

⁵ Bodleian MSS Finch d. 21, f. 171. Subsequent references, unless otherwise indicated, will be to the MSS in the Finch Collection in the Bodleian Library.

PARSON AND COLONEL

spected the Colonel. That Mrs. Gisborne herself had some doubts of his character seems clear from Mary's comments. The letter was written from Rome, April 26, 1819.

Yesterday evening I met at a *Conversazione* the true model of Biddy Fudge's lover—an Englishman with "the dear Corsair expression half savage half soft"—with the beautiful mixture of "Abelard & old Blucher"—& his forehead "rather bald but so warlike" and his mustachios on which the lamp shone with as fine an effect as the sun did upon Biddy's Hero—that when I heard his [him?] called Signore Colonello I could not retain a smile which nearly degenerated into laughter when I thought that we had Colonel Calicot in Rome—⁶ Presently he began in very good Italian which although Englishly pronounced yet is better spoken than any other Englishman that I have heard—to give an account of his warlike feats and how at Lisbon he had put to flight thirty well armed & well mounted robbers (he on foot) with two pistols that never missed their aim—There can be but one such man in the world as you will be convinced when I tell you that while I was admiring his extraordinary prowess Clare whispered to me *It is Colonel Finch*—You asked me to tell you what I had heard of him at Venice—only one or two shabby tricks too long for a letter & that an officer who served in Spain of the same regiment to which he pretends to belong vows that there was no Col^{nel} Finch there—report says that he is a parson & Lord B's nick name for his particular friend—is the *Reverend Colonel Finch*.⁷

⁶ Mary here refers to and quotes from Thomas Moore's *The Fudge Family in Paris*, edited by Thomas Brown the Younger, London, 1818. Biddy thought Colonel Calicot to be no less than the King of Prussia in disguise; he proved to be a draper's clerk. Further references in the letters and journals of Mary and Clare to "Fudge" or "the scion of the Fudges" are probably references to Finch.

⁷ Bodleian MSS Shelley c. 1, ff. 333–34. It is perhaps worth noting that Finch owned a copy of Baron Munchausen's *Surprising Adventures*, in which the—shall we say more realistic—exploits are scored with the pencil marks of his interest.

Report, of course, said true. Finch's name nowhere appears in the Army Lists; there is no cranny in his biography into which service in Spain could be fitted; he had taken deacon's orders. Although he was in Lisbon in 1813, there is in his very full diary no trace of the thirty robbers. They must have worn buckram!

To what extent Finch's irascibility, his insistence on his own importance, his dreams of greatness, and his boasting were due not only to vanity in the ordinary sense but also to a sense of physical inferiority resulting from constant ill health, perhaps only a psychoanalyst could tell us. He suffered all his life from pulmonary weakness and from an affection of the eyes that was often so severe as to deprive him of the use of them for days or even weeks. There is hardly an entry in the diaries which does not record some pain or ailment—even several on one day. His correspondence through the years bears witness to frequent illnesses. He became old before his time; Crabb Robinson spoke of him to his brother in 1829 as "an elderly man" and recorded in his diary that Mayer, writing of Finch's death, said he was only forty-six—"Can that be? He looked 60." He dwelt much, when he was in his twenties, on the thought of his own death, which he believed was not far off. Perhaps it is not strange, then, that he created for himself, in both his sleeping and his waking dreams, a world in which he could play a part impossible for him in actuality or that he tried to convince both his associates and himself that it was, not a part, but a reality.

How far he deceived himself, it is hard to say. Up to a certain point, at least, he probably believed in the romances he wove about his character, his abilities, and his achievements. It is true that the accounts in his journals are perfectly credible; it is only in his letters or in the

reports of his conversation which we find in the letters of others that we read his "tall stories." But his indignation over any challenge to his integrity sounds quite as genuine in the private diaries as it does in the letters which he wrote to refute such charges.

In his own nobility of character and high potentialities he probably believed implicitly—or would not let himself disbelieve. In 1814 he was an ardent admirer of Napoleon, proud of the fact that he was said to resemble him in features. He collected Napoleonic coins and medals, he planned to go to Elba, he eagerly read and listened to all the accounts of those who had seen his hero in exile, until he convinced at least one correspondent that he himself had conversed with Napoleon, though the diaries contain no such record.⁸ Of his possession of abilities like those of Napoleon he was quite sure. "My strength is now dwindl'd away," he wrote in 1813; "my faculties are half benumb'd; yet were I even now monarch of a country like America, I would crush England, and perhaps even humble France."⁹ In other fields of activity, too, he felt greatness stirring within his soul. "I read few, very few modern works, but that I say to myself—What a much better work could I have written on this subject!"¹⁰

In spite of his self-confidence, however, he was one of those unfortunate persons who do moderately well in many things, but not really well in anything—the proverbial jack-of-all-trades. He bitterly disappointed his father by not qualifying to become a candidate for a

⁸ According to Crabb Robinson, Mayer stated in 1831, in an article in the *Anthologia*, that Finch had had the friendship of Napoleon. "Had it been true," comments Robinson, "a friend should have concealed it." Dr. Williams Library Robinson MSS, "Reminiscences," 1831, f. 15. Unpublished.

⁹ c. 3, ff. 103-4.

¹⁰ c. 4, f. 70.

fellowship; he dreamed—and talked—of being chosen Bampton Lecturer, of being appointed to fill his grandfather's pulpit in St. Michael's, Cornhill, but his audiences, except for a brief period at Hampstead or the occasions when he preached ("giving much satisfaction") for Dr. Charles Burney, father of his intimate friend, were confined to the country parishes where he held curacies. He planned great literary works, works of scholarship and of value; his publications were confined to two sermons, two Latin poems, and an occasional article in a magazine. He wrote a few articles and poems for the Italian academies to which he was elected a corresponding associate. There are some sonnets and epigrams, in English, Italian, and Greek, scattered through his diaries. In 1826 he projected some kind of "literary sallad," with a plentiful mixture of "pepper, salt, mustard, and vinegar,"¹¹ which evidently came to nothing. He began to translate the poems of the King of Bavaria and he went so far as to send in 1829 notices to be inserted in the English periodicals, but he destroyed what he had done before the year was out. His lifelong friend and man of business, Thomas Webster, on hearing of this destruction, wrote regretfully, "I cannot for a moment allow myself to think that one so highly talented will float down the Stream of life without leaving many memorials to evince those talents nature has so liberally bestowed on him."¹² Yet that is precisely what he did. There is something pathetic in that "elderly man" of forty-six whom Crabb Robinson met:

A sort of diletanti in letters who keeps a secretary—has a library of 10,000 vols. he amuses himself with buying books & talking about them and having lived in good company in

¹¹ See letters from Richard Davenport, d. 5, ff. 40–46.

¹² d. 16, ff. 291–92.

Engl. is himself an entertaining companion—he is somewhat of an invalide and is very glad to give me tea in return for my literary gossip.¹³

Even Finch's most ambitious project, which must have been in his thoughts from the time he began to travel in 1813, to publish portions of his diaries, came to naught. By 1823 he had formulated a plan to give to the world "an account of Italy more complete and detailed than any that has yet appeared."¹⁴ The failure was not due to want of labor: he read widely and seriously, he devoted himself to a full and careful examination and description of buildings, ruins, libraries, art galleries, and their contents, forswearing all society in Rome until he had completed his studies, seeking out scholars who could be useful to him, learning languages.¹⁵ Yet the great work was never accomplished. After his death, his widow and his secretary set themselves to the task of preparing the material in the diaries for publication. But they were unsuccessful, and the volumes of the diary, scored and revised in Mrs. Finch's hand, remain in manuscript.¹⁶ Nor is the failure to interest a publisher surprising: the writing is heavy-handed and lifeless; elaborately descriptive, but with little interpretation; devoted to brick and stone and canvas and marble, but scarcely glancing at human beings—not even second rate.

His style reflects his literary tastes. His library was that of the antiquary and the scholar rather than that of

¹³ Letter from H. C. R. to his brother T. R., Dec. 17, 1829. Dr. Williams Library Robinson MSS, Letters: 1827-29, f. 163. Unpublished.

¹⁴ Letter to his mother, July 19, 1823, d. 7, ff. 112-13.

¹⁵ His journals are written in six languages: English, French, Italian, German, Latin, and Greek.

¹⁶ See the letters from Mrs. Finch and Henry Mayer to Henry Crabb Robinson, Dr. Williams Library Robinson MSS, Letters: 1832-33, ff. 31, 104, 139, 143; 1834-35, ff. 27, 88; 1836-37, f. 83.

the man of deep culture and, dilettante though he was, of wide interests. Although his correspondence indicates his ready response to news of current art, literature, and science, there was little indication on his bookshelves of a real concern in the writings of his contemporaries in any field. He bought no books on contemporary affairs, and he rarely read the newspapers.¹⁷ His chief concern in 1830 was with a sale of books, for he was "proceeding with the patient work of completing my large collection of Greek and Roman classicks."¹⁸ Of the 1,060 volumes (21 folios out of 203 in the MS catalogue of his books) of "Poetry, Novels, Letters & Essays," only 152 are by his contemporaries. The eighteenth century, especially the first half, makes a slightly better showing.¹⁹ The collection of older English classics is meager. Before Shakespeare in English poetry he did not go. The actual value of his collection of the classics and of other foreign books is not very great. He gathered together a goodly number of old books in pleasant bindings. Some of them he noted as extremely rare, but the fuller bibliographical knowledge of the twentieth century will not support all his enthusiasms. His library was, however, good enough to supply to Oxford University several thousand volumes which it did not own and which it was glad to add to the Bodleian Library and the Library of the Taylor Institution.

His knowledge of art was not very profound, nor was his taste very sure. Of the pictures which he collected and catalogued with such loving care, which are now in

¹⁷ Dr. Williams Library Robinson MSS, Letters: 1830-31, f. 37. July 27, 1830.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 12.

¹⁹ In his university days he regarded Crowe's "Lewesdon Hill" as a "masterpiece of poetry,"—his favorite poem (c. 21, p. 167). There is a copy of it in his library, with passages enthusiastically underscored and annotated. In 1803 he read it for the twenty-third time.

the possession of Oxford University, a few have some value, others are worth little. Happy chance, apparently, rather than good judgment brought him several good paintings, such as a "Venus and Adonis," by Luca Giordano, "The Triumph of Psyche," by Giulio Romano, a study, possibly by Titian, of the "Madonna and Child with St. Francis," two fish studies by Ricci, and an occasional excellent drawing—a Turner, a Lely (a gift to him from Frederick Christian Lewis, the engraver), an Elsheimer "Crucifixion," and a "Massacre of the Innocents" of the Veronese school, this last probably the finest thing in his whole collection. But some of his other prized "original" paintings and drawings are palpable copies. His collection of coins and medals has been characterized by an authority as "a fair collection of the jackdaw variety," the best specimens being the early-nineteenth-century French coins, gathered in the height of his admiration for Napoleon. It is impossible to hold him in very high respect as a connoisseur of literature or of art. Yet he genuinely loved books and pictures—that is clear—and his claim to knowledge of them was not spurious in the same sense as his claim to the title "Lieutenant Colonel" was spurious.

It was perhaps as a friend and patron that Finch achieved his greatest success. Even in this relationship, in spite of the occasional grandiloquent phrases in his journals and letters—"my dear friend Byron," "our friend Coleridge"—he never attained the highest. Byron's only printed reference to him is as "an English acquaintance of H[obhouse]'s and mine";²⁰ there is no evidence that he ever saw Coleridge. The Shelleys' opinion of him is clear; he probably did not know Keats, although he was in Rome at the time of his death and met

²⁰ *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, ed. by Murray, II, 24.

Severn before or shortly afterward and may possibly have been one of the "several English visitors who," according to Severn, "since his death, had suddenly become interested in his pathetic story (or such of it as was known), [and] attended at the final ceremony."²¹ But among men who were less great than these greatest he had many warm friends. He won and, with a few exceptions, held the friendship of men such as Leigh Hunt, Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Henry Crabb Robinson, Joseph Severn, Charles Armitage Brown, Charles Eastlake, James Pen-nethorne, Ambrose Poynter, Peter Elmsley, and James Wathen. In fact, the list of his English correspondents reads like the index to the *Dictionary of National Biography* for the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Among the Italians he won the warm regard of men known, at least in their own day, as scholars, writers, and artists. The most notable names are probably those of Canova (though there is no evidence of close friendship with him), Giovanni Battista Niccolini, and Ugo Foscolo. Of Foscolo the story is told by one of Finch's London correspondents that he had found at Somerset House a portrait so like his "Caro Finch" that he used to go and "apostrophize it in so loud a tone as to draw the attention of the whole room . . . 'oh Caro Finch come back, amico mio, return to poor Ugo Foscolo—my friend come to me.'"²² And there is a note in Italian from Foscolo on the back of one of Francis Lee's letters to Finch, beginning, "Caro carissimo amico mio—Penso a voi di' e notte."²³ Even after we discount the extravagance of

²¹ William Sharp, *The Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, London, 1892, p. 96.

²² Letter from Clara Wells Wheeler, Sept. 22, 1817, d. 17, ff. 17-18.

²³ d. 10, ff. 270-71 (March 2, 1819). There is no complete letter from Foscolo among the manuscripts. In *Opere edite e postume di Ugo Foscolo: epistolario*, Firenze, 1854, III, 344-45, there is a letter from Foscolo to Finch, dated Zurich, 17 July, 1816, full of affection, and

compliment with which the Latin usually writes, there is in the letters from Vaccà, Palmerini, Rosaspina, Gatteschi, Gambarà, Grottanelli, Lusciano, Vitale, and Pallavicini a residue of genuine respect and friendship. The same is true of letters from other foreigners: Vieuksseux, the editor, Teerlinck, the artist, Bunsen, the diplomat and scholar.

In his younger days in Oxford and in London, Finch gathered about him a circle of friends, male and female, who were, most of them, his intellectual inferiors. He dominated them, and if, as occasionally happened, he could not monopolize the attention of the circle or of an individual, he was jealous, moody, and even rude. After making up with Clara Wells a quarrel resulting from her alleged neglect of him in favor of Thomas Wheeler (whom she later married), he laments that he "cannot get her to particularize her friendship, and to make her bend her opinions to my own." It is a pleasure to find one independent young woman who would not bow to "the tyranny that I think ought to exist in friendship."²⁴ He was happy—and so usually were his friends—as long as he could feel himself their superior. The headings of a letter from Lisbon (he had the useful habit of summarizing his letters in his diary) to one of the young women of the group show his penchant for teaching and preaching. No wonder they called him "Mr. Finch," though he called them by their first names.

Wrote to Louisa today. (on true friendship—on earthquakes—winds & storms—character of the Portuguese modinhas—on the rank of Fidalgo—royal chapels here—

suggesting to Finch that he translate Foscolo's *Notizia bibliographica*. A note says that the letter was contributed by an English lady who had it from Finch.

²⁴ Diary, December 16, 1813, e. 6, ff. 56-57.

love of garlick—vermin about the persons of the Portuguese—growth of fruits here—on the distinctive characters of antient and modern dresses—Theophrastus considered as a Natural Philosopher—on modern warfare, and the present state of the world—on good works as a test of faith—theology of Plato—a proper pride and ambition—on benevolence and good-nature—on auxiliary verbs in different languages . . . on the tonsure of the Catholic church—it's being emblematical of our Saviour's crown of thorns—some directions about driving—on proper self-confidence—on Hippocrates . . . on love—joke about the red herrings—her diamond ring—birds here—on the fable of the Phoenix with references . . . the pledge she gave me of advancement in her studies— . . . on the action of fire on different bodies—on silence and a modest demeanour—on pity and terror in tragedy—on the drift of our Saviour's question "Whom say ye that I am?" . . . on a proper attention to smartness in her shoes and stockings—on corrupt abridgments in conversation . . . on the rank of Archbishop in the church—her affection to me—on music—on habits of reflection necessary in women . . . on the literature of the East—directions about her earrings—on worldly-mindedness—directions about eating gracefully—on eclipses—on patterns of edging, and remarks on Charlotte's that she sent me . . . care of the hands—her sleeping in gloves—on oratory—character of what may be considered harmless diversions—criminality of the expression "I hate," as applied to persons . . . the union between her and her dear sister, &c.) ²⁵

Yet in those "harmless diversions" he could be gay with the gayest. But from its pompous stride through his letters, one suspects his gaiety to have been rather elephantine, considered, artificial. It must have made a poor showing beside the charm and agility of mind of his

²⁵ e. 5, ff. 62, 65-67.

friend Charles Parr Burney, who could make puns as well as the Admiral. Finch's wit very probably was often borrowed and even rehearsed: he records a pun made by Emma Wells and adds, "N. B. To make use of this, on occasion, myself!"²⁶—yet he must have the credit of the exclamation point. He believed, it is clear, in making use of his friends.

A man [he confided to his diary] should be careful in selecting friends. He should discern what men have something to squeeze out of them. Of what use would it be to make a collection of tenpenny nails? In keeping my accompts with my acquaintance, I like always to post myself in the column of Debtor.²⁷

With his friends in Italy—a collection of far more than tenpenny nails—he must have used a different technique. For most of them were his superiors in ability and intellect. Moreover, what did Severn and Charles Armitage Brown, who had known Keats, what did Leigh Hunt and Thomas Jefferson Hogg, who had known Shelley, what did Crabb Robinson, who knew Wordsworth, find to like in the Reverend Colonel Finch? They found, it is certain, a friend and well wisher, eager for their friendship. They found a man who was ready to serve them in all possible ways: to entertain them in his house, with his attractive wife and charming sister-in-law as hostesses, to write scores of letters of introduction for them, to obtain anything for them, from Naples yellow to a collation of Sophocles manuscripts, to secure the measurements of a certain church in Rome or a drawing of a statue, above all to commission an occasional picture or bust and pay generously for it. And so most of them were his obliged servants and devoted friends to the end

²⁶ e. 6, f. 73.

²⁷ e. 4, f. 88.

of his days. Even if it was largely vanity and a desire to stand well in the eyes of others that moved him, the fact remains that he again and again posted himself in the column of "Creditor" rather than "Debtor." Yet he apparently did Hogg no essential service, or Leigh Hunt.²⁸ He must have had some personal charm to win such men. There are also Charles Parr Burney and Dr. Charles Burney, grandson and son, respectively, of the "Musical Doctor," and Dr. Thomas Hodgkin, the Quaker physician, men of character and charm and ability, who were his loyal and admiring friends always. It is hard to see the attraction when reading Finch's own letters and diaries, but the letters from others are convincing. Perhaps his charm lay in his ability to be "all things to all men." His friends wrote him of their interests and concerns, sure that they would receive a sympathetic and moreover an informed and intelligent response, whether on politics, on literature, on science, on the classics, on theology, on archaeology, on painting, on sculpture, or on architecture. But it was Finch's fate to be mentioned but rarely in the published diaries and letters of these his friends and so to have missed that path, as well as the more direct roads, to fame.

A few of those who were his friends for a time ran afoul, sooner or later, of his readiness to take offense and his quick temper. Captain Hely, who was reproved by Crabb Robinson for making untimely accusations at Finch's grave, had had some trouble over a marred teapot and some money owing. It is difficult to make out the

²⁸ Mrs. Hunt wrote to Mary Shelley, October 10, 1823, that Hunt had asked Finch for a loan, but that she had little hope, "for the gentleman I allude to is rather purse proud & is going to Rome in a week or ten days." Finch brought "the first Doctor in Sienna" to see Marianne; he and his wife and sister-in-law all showed "great anxiety" about her. Bodleian MSS, "Letters of Shelley's Acquaintances," ff. 42-43.

rights of the case from the heated letters on both sides.²⁹ But the point at issue in his quarrel with Richard Westmacott, Jr., is perfectly clear and also very familiar—Finch's right to the title "Lieutenant Colonel," which it is quite certain he had adopted for his own purposes in 1815. Westmacott, a sculptor, was one of the young artists who in the 1820's were studying in Italy. Like Severn, Eastlake, Donaldson, Etty, Pennethorne, Kirkup, the Vulliamy brothers, Brockedon, Davies, and Poynter, he had experienced the patronage and the hospitality of Finch and his wife. They must all have known the truth about Finch: that his only legitimate title was "Reverend," that he had assumed that of "Lieutenant Colonel" partly, perhaps, for the convenience of having a military passport which exempted him from customs inspection, but chiefly, no doubt, for the sake of impressing the Greeks, the Turks, and the Italians. Most of the Englishmen ignored the "Colonel" altogether and wrote to Robert Finch, Esq. A few humored their patron's vanity. What the others said of him behind his back, we do not know. But Westmacott, who in 1821 and 1822 wrote friendly and often long letters to Finch, by 1824 was unable to hold his tongue. One man to whom he talked reported to Finch, and Finch dispatched one of his characteristic letters, challenging Westmacott "to declare on what grounds you insolently dar'd to affirm behind my back that I was 'a Rhodomontader,' 'a man, who shot with a long bow,' 'one, to whom no one would give credence for a word that he utter'd.' " ³⁰ With equal heat but more dignity Westmacott replied:

[W]ith respect to my opinion of yourself it has been formed upon circumstances very generally known, among

²⁹ See d. 7, ff. 110–11; d. 9, ff. 190–93.

³⁰ d. 7, f. 124. Evidently a copy, in Finch's hand.

others on your assumption of Titles, permitting and even directing yourself to be addressed as a Colonel and as a Clergyman, & vice versa your denying yourself to be of the Profession of the Church.³¹

What Severn and Westmacott's other friends thought of the whole quarrel we do not know. Poynter and Donaldson, having heard only Finch's side, and that rather vaguely stated, wrote from London, deploring the situation and explaining and making excuses for Westmacott's conduct.³² Most of them continued on friendly terms with Finch. Eastlake was writing to him, in 1830, of his election to the Royal Academy. Certainly Severn's friendship suffered no serious interruption. His baby was christened in September of 1829 at the Albano home of the Finches, who stood godparents to the child, and in the early part of 1830 Finch purchased Severn's "Ariel." It is hard to believe that Severn was actuated only by material motives. It is easier and pleasanter to think that he, like Crabb Robinson or Charles Parr Burney or Thomas Hodgkin or T. J. Hogg, although probably quite aware of Finch's faults, yet found enough of good, enough of charm in him to ensure his loyalty and enable him to look with friendly tolerance upon the Reverend Colonel's "infirmities" and to accept him as he was.

³¹ d. 17, ff. 121-22; see also ff. 123-24 and d. 15, ff. 57-58.

³² See d. 13, ff. 459-60, and d. 5, ff. 152-53.

II. SON AND STUDENT

THE SKETCH of Robert Finch's life to be found on his "sepulchral monument" and in the *Dictionary of National Biography* can be quite amply filled out by means of the diaries, commonplace books, and correspondence. The correspondence includes few of Finch's own letters, and the full journals for part of 1816 and for the years after 1818 are missing.¹ Consequently there are few records of his acquaintance with Byron, none of his infrequent meetings with the Shelleys, and only a hint or two that he was interested in Keats. These gaps are especially to be regretted by the student of English literature. Yet even from the broken records and the one-sided correspondence it is possible to build up a fairly full and coherent narrative.

Robert Finch was born December 27, 1783. He was the only child of Thomas Finch, barrister-at-law of the Inner Temple, a Fellow of the Royal Society. Of Robert's mother we know nothing except that her name was Mary. His paternal grandfather was Dr. Robert Poole Finch, an eminent clergyman, Chaplain of Guy's Hospital for thirty-seven years, Rector of St. Michael's, Cornhill, from 1771 to 1783, prebendary of Westminster from 1781 to the time of his death. He died in 1803 and was buried in Westminster Abbey. Who his wife was, we do not know. According to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the "lady of the Rev. Dr. Finch" died on March 13, 1796. A marginal note in Finch's hand in his copy of Debrett's *Peerage* for 1820 lays claim to the Eighth Earl of Pembroke as his great-grandfather

¹ There are small summary diaries for 1816-17, 1829, and 1830.

through the second marriage, "to R. P. Finch," of his youngest daughter, Lady Abergavenny, who died in 1758, a year after Thomas Finch was born.² Although on another page of this same issue³ a "Mr. Finch" is named as the second husband of Lady Abergavenny, no other peerage, no obituary, no parish record, not even her will hints at a second marriage. Granting that the Pembroke family might have wished, for some reason, to conceal the connection, it is difficult to believe that Robert Finch would ever have foregone the opportunity of announcing it publicly. But unless the lions quartered on the coat of arms on his tomb are the lions of Pembroke, he made no such announcement. His temperament being what it was, I can regard this marginal note only as the birth of a story which never grew to manhood.

He did not hesitate at all to claim kinship with the noble houses of Winchilsea and Aylesford, whose family name was Finch. The claim is carved on his tombstone, it is engraved on his bookplate, it is embossed on his silver, it is inscribed on the wrappers of letters from his Italian friends.⁴ There is little doubt that he belonged to the Finch family to which the Earls of Winchilsea and of Aylesford also belonged. Kent, his grandfather's native county, was full of Finches. Brief biographical sketches of him and of his grandfather are included in *The History of the Finch Family*, by Bryan I'Anson.⁵ But it is impossible to find the exact twig of the family tree on which he should be hung; it is, perhaps, too tiny a twig to be visible in the picture.

² Vol. I, p. 147.

³ *Ibid.*, I, 297.

⁴ In directing their letters they used some of or even all the possible titles: All' Illustrissimo Cavaliere e Tenente Colonello, Il Capitano Signore Roberto Finch, di Conti di Winchilsea (or Winkilsea or even Kinkilsea).

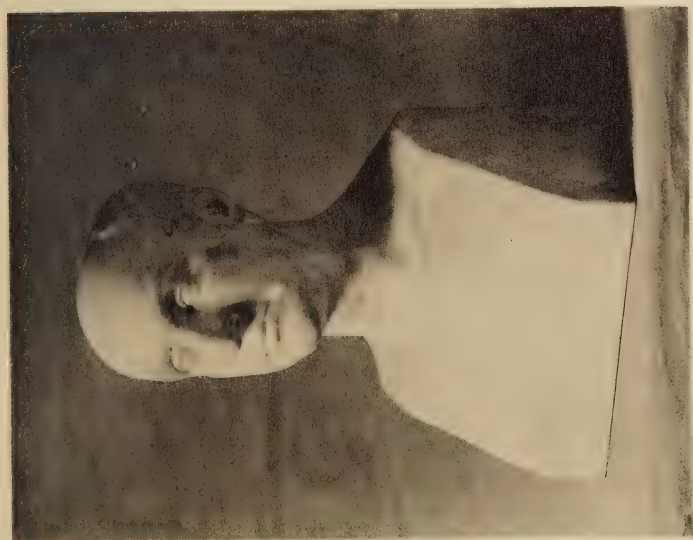
⁵ London, Janson & Co., 1933, pp. 99, 101.

Robert was evidently a sickly child. Because of this fact, his education was largely in the hands of his father. He entered St. Paul's School, where his grandfather was one of the Apposers, on November 23, 1795. But by November, 1798, at the latest, he was no longer in school. His education proceeded, however, under the tutorship of his father, and on March 16, 1802, he matriculated at Balliol College, Oxford, and was awarded a scholarship. He received his B.A. degree in 1805.

From his letters to his son, Thomas Finch emerges a modest, wise, and gentle man. His home at 42 Great Ormond Street was one of culture, where pleasant and interesting friends gathered, including James Northcote, who had painted Dr. Robert Poole Finch's portrait,⁶ Dr. Marlow, President of St. John's College, Oxford, Professor Abraham Robertson, of New College, Dr. Yate, Bishop of Gloucester and later of Hereford, Samuel Cotes and his wife Sarah, both artists. The bust of Thomas Finch by Nollekens, completed in 1812, shows a face strong yet gentle, the decided nose and the firm jaw being offset by the sweet and sensitive, though by no means weak or effeminate, mouth. It is the face of an intellectual and an idealist. Robert, to judge by his bust, modeled by Ewing,⁷ inherited his father's nose. But the jaw is jutting and belligerent, the mouth petulant. The elder Finch was an affectionate and proud parent. His letters are full of gratification in Robert's literary and scholarly pursuits, of eagerness for his success, of wise admonition and advice. He treated his son as an intellectual equal and discussed with him books and public affairs. To do him justice, Robert, though he presumed upon his father's indulgence and generosity and once fell

⁶ This hangs in the office of the University Chest, Oxford.

⁷ The two busts are in the library of the Taylor Institution, Oxford.



ROBERT FINCH



THOMAS FINCH

out of sympathy with him for several months, never really failed in his love and admiration.

The basis of Robert's attitude toward his mother is not at all clear. In 1817 he wrote to Clara Wells that owing to his mother's malice he had never been really happy since his birth; and his diaries from 1813 to 1818 contain frequent wishes for the death of that vile wretch, his unfeeling, his cruel and barbarous mother, who lives only to torment him. Of lack of sympathy between them there is evidence in the elder Finch's letters; he sometimes urges his son to write to her and alludes occasionally to quarrels between them. Mrs. Finch's letters to her son are very infrequent and are quite unemotional and matter-of-fact. Possibly part of the secret lies in a statement she made in one of her rare letters to him, in 1806, when his father was protesting mildly against his increasing demands for money. "Now for Mrs. Bowles," she writes, "that her misery is encreasing does not surprize me at all therefore it should be a lesson to all around her to make the happy distinction between extravagance and meanness the happy medium is to be wished perhaps it is very difficult to be prudent and generous but those are the Characters most worthy of imitation."⁸ The application to Robert's own affairs is clear. After the death of his father in 1810, he separated from his mother, and, in spite of efforts on the part of friends to bring them together, direct communication between them evidently ceased until 1821.

The resumption of communication is not to Robert's credit, and it gives some color to the conjecture that her "cruelty" may have been another name for financial prudence. The news of his marriage in Italy the year before

⁸ d. 6, ff. 264-65. Mrs. Finch is an excellent speller, but she never troubles with punctuation.

reached his mother's ears, and she promptly sent his wife a wedding gift of money. Finch's response was immediate, grateful, and affectionate. He dismissed their estrangement with an admonition to say and think no more of it—"all retrospection I deem very useless and very unpleasant"—and proceeded to tell her of his adventures (with embellishments), of his wife, of their establishment and their expenses; he invited her to Italy and concluded by signing himself "Your dutiful & affectionate Son."⁹ Thereafter, until her death, in 1827, he wrote her frequently, solicitously inquiring after her health, expressing alarm at not hearing from her, thanking her for her offers of assistance, assuring her that although they had no actual needs it would benefit Maria's health if they had a horse and help Maria's art if they could afford pictures, but urging her not to deprive herself of any comforts. He enlisted the services of Thomas Webster, who often reports in his letters that he has hinted to Mrs. Finch that she send her son a check. Occasionally she responded to these hints; more often she told Webster to send Robert and Maria her love and tell them that she did not write because she had nothing to say. It undoubtedly delighted the shrewd and humorous old lady to tantalize her son, through whose protestations of "unfeign'd esteem and affection" she must have seen, with occasional gifts and frequent withholdings. Her first present may have been motivated by a wistful desire to resume relations with her only child. She had turned to him with pathetic eagerness and longing immediately after his father's death.¹⁰ But her infrequent letters after his marriage, though they express affection and a desire for his welfare and happiness, are dry and ironic. Her response to his obvious eagerness for another gift is: "if

⁹ d. 7, ff. 60-61.

¹⁰ See d. 7, ff. 29-30, 31-32.

you dont think £50 pounds too small a sum to accept and let me know where to pay it you will gratify me by making it yours";¹¹ and again,

finding when I cast up Stock that £80 was at your service I thought a few *Guinea pigs* would sweeten my nonsensical scrawl and not prove unacceptable to the receiver . . . I shall be very proud to have a Landscape of Mrs. Finch drawing my expectations are so much raised by your account that I shall expect it to surpass any Cuyp I ever saw though he is my favorite Master I need not repeat that I am glad to hear from you or Mrs. F when you please or that you have not any thing better to do but you must not wait at any time for my reply as I get very nervous of course you will send me a speedy answer in this instance.¹²

He answered within a week. His last preserved letter to her, dated September 12, 1826, thanks her for a munificent present which places him perfectly at his ease for a year and pays for "a very beautiful work of art," probably either the Titian or the Poussin which he had previously asked his mother for money to purchase. Six months later his mother died, and he went to England to enter gladly into his inheritance: about £1,300, the house and stables in Great Ormond Street, the books, bookcases, and plate.¹³

All this, however, was in the future when Robert Finch went up to Balliol in March of 1802. He went with genuine anticipation of the study which he loved. Yet, he wrote to a friend,

¹¹ *Ibid.*, ff. 86-87.

¹² *Ibid.*, ff. 101-2.

¹³ The residue of her estate was to be divided between Miss Harvey, who had been her companion, and John Abbiss. Evidently Finch had some thoughts of disputing the will on the ground of undue influence, but was dissuaded by Webster (d. 16, ff. 225-26). Webster later refers (ff. 255-56) to a case *Abbiss v. Finch*. Possibly this was a dispute over Northcote's portrait of Robert Poole Finch. See ff. 239-40.

The honors, which are establish'd in the university are, according to the accounts, which I have heard, very difficult of attainment. They require you to be a Rhetorician, a Logician, a Metaphysician, a moral philosopher, a Divine, a Mathematician, a classical Scholar, an Hebraean, in short, “ὡς ζυνελων λεγοιμι” you must be, what the great Grotius said of Salmasius “Vir infinitae lectionis.” Such prospects nearly damp my ambition at once.

Discouraging, too, was the fact that few of his fellow students were, like himself, “in love with learning”: they seemed “rather to bow before her as an imperious wife, than devote themselves to her as a fascinating mistress.” On the whole, however, life was pleasant in his chambers next to the Broad Street Tower, and he found the food good:

Excellent bread; delicious butter, in general *good beef*, fine mutton, excellently tasted pork and tolerable veal. Sometimes good bak'd plumb-pudding, very good meat pies and fruit pies and great variety of every thing. For 10½d we have as large a commons as we can eat & abundance of vegetables for 2d more. . . . At Trinity their battling is very expensive for it amounts to 1s 10d for meat & vegetables; theirs being joints, which I think not so pleasant.

He took his exercise in Magdalen Grove, a charming spot.

How persons can desert this to walk in the parks I can't conceive, but I suppose it is because the one is grac'd with the lonely majesty of wisdom & the other bedeck'd with the gaudy crowds of folly. This latter seems to be the most fashionable promenade in Oxford & in my opinion it is the most unpleasant one of all. But Magdalen is indeed being “inter sylvas Academi.”¹⁴

¹⁴ c. 40, ff. 150-60.

Such was the beginning of Robert Finch's life at Oxford. As the months went by, he made good and lasting friends, some of whom kept in touch with him by letters throughout his life. Chief among them were George Arnold, Samuel Gamlen, later to be Minor Canon of Durham, Benjamin Cheese, who became a Fellow of Balliol, Samuel McCormick, who left the university and went to America for a few years, whence he wrote Finch some interesting letters from New York, William MacDonald, the future Canon of Salisbury and Archdeacon of Wiltshire, Richard Jenkyns, who became Master of Balliol and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, Charles Parr Burney, grandson of the "Musical Doctor," Reginald Heber, the famous Bishop of Calcutta, and John Wilson, later and better known as "Christopher North."¹⁵ With these friends he passed through the usual experiences of undergraduate life, reading and playing, stirred by university events and national crises. When all England was roused over the threat of invasion by Napoleon and volunteer companies were formed throughout the land, most of these young men joined one corps or another. Finch evidently belonged to one of the London companies. He took his "military avocations" very seriously for a time, so that they interfered with his studies and his correspondence, and he dreamed of winning royal favor and a high commission.¹⁶ His enthusiasm died down,

¹⁵ MacDonald and Burney were two of the trustees named in Finch's will. By the terms of that will, after the death of Mrs. Finch and of Henry Mayer, his personal property was to go to the first son of MacDonald to reach the age of twenty-five on condition that he added the name of Finch to his own name, quartered the arms of Finch with his family arms, and assumed the Finch crest. I have found no indication that this was ever done.

¹⁶ See his copy of a letter—probably never sent—to Prince William of Gloucester alluding to an offer which His Highness probably never made (c. 21, pp. 313-15).

however, even before the national alarm had subsided, and he withdrew from his corps on the ground of "Academical absence."

Behind the young Scholar of Balliol was a proud family, especially the two male members of it, watching eagerly for his letters, rejoicing in every commendation of him, drinking his health on high days and holy days, especially on his birthday and on the anniversary of his matriculation. His grandfather died in 1803, before anything happened to shake his faith in the future of his grandson. But his father was destined to some bitter moments of disappointment and disillusionment. Robert not only failed of appointment to a fellowship, but he gave evidence of rebelling against the discipline of the college,¹⁷ had some trouble, not clearly explained, with his tutor, Mr. Powell, and announced suddenly to his father that he was resolved to remove from Balliol to another college, presumably Hertford.

Mr. Powell was undoubtedly George Powell, the eccentric Fellow of Balliol,¹⁸ whose rooms were near Finch's. He was the "profound mathematician, classical scholar, and Hebraean" of whom Robert had written shortly after his matriculation,

He never sees any company and scarcely ever stirs out of his rooms except to Chapel. I hope we shall be more acquainted, as our love of retirement is equally congenial to both, and he has himself given me some little encouragement. He is a deep astronomer and has form'd an observatory on the top of the tower, in which he resides. His study, I am told, has never been entred by any one, himself ex-

¹⁷ Finch had evidently some justification for his dissatisfaction. See H. W. C. Davis, *Balliol College* (University of Oxford: College Histories), pp. 172-74.

¹⁸ See Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

cepted, since his possession of the apartments. No sacrilegious scout ever dares to approach it.¹⁹

Mr. Powell had broken his seclusion sufficiently in that first year to receive his young neighbor and even to read and criticize the Latin poem which he wrote for the prize. But evidently the close association of tutor and pupil in 1804 was more than either of them could bear.

Finch's plan to transfer to Hertford College was given up. His father appealed to his good friend Dr. Marlow, President of St. John's, who intervened and helped in the final decisions and arrangements. It was determined that the young man should leave college, study under a private tutor, and return to Balliol for the Michaelmas term and take his degree. At first he planned to live at home, but eventually he went to stay, until the following October, with a Mr. Baynes at Exton—a completely satisfactory arrangement, apparently, at least on Robert's part.

The extent of Mr. Finch's distress, disappointment, and disillusionment may be seen in his letters.²⁰ He was not only agitated by the whole situation, he was hurt by Robert's failure to confide in him, though he had confided in others, and he was profoundly perturbed by the evidences of his son's difficult temperament, which showed itself in a more unfavorable light than ever before. The father's grave reproofs, however, did not, as future events showed, eradicate the son's faults.

Robert may, though a nineteenth-century son, have made a few remarks worthy of the twentieth century about interfering parents. He settled down, however, at Exton, enjoying his studies, his tutor's wines, the scenery of Berkshire, and the society of the neighborhood, espe-

¹⁹ e. 40, ff. 150–51.

²⁰ See especially d. 6, ff. 226–29.

cially that of a Lady Georgianna, otherwise unidentified. He returned to Oxford in October and took his degree in December, 1805.

After the Christmas holidays, spent near Bristol, he again took up his residence at Balliol, studying Aristotle and Arabic and mathematics, suffering from a severe affection of the eyes and taking excursions to rest them and to see new parts of England. He made a six-week tour through Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire, part of the journal of which, with elaborate descriptions of scenery and buildings, is included in his Commonplace Book for 1806–7. His disgust with Balliol and Oxford of the year before had been dissipated: not only was he glad to be again in residence (partly, perhaps, because he was glad not to be at home), but he recorded in no uncertain terms, after having visited Cambridge, his conviction of its inferiority to Oxford. He would allow Cambridge superiority only in Trinity Quadrangle [*sic!*], Trinity Library, and King's College Chapel. And of the last he wrote: "King's seems as if an heavenly Architect had intended it for Oxford, and had accidentally dropt it at Cambridge in his way. It is at Cambridge like a diamond in a coal mine. It would at Oxford be in a cavern of spar, and it's superiority would, of course, be more conspicuous" ²¹—which statement, perhaps, is more loyal than logical.

²¹ d. 30, f. 98.

III. CURATE AND TUTOR

IN THE AUTUMN he began seriously to set about securing a post. His application for the curacy of St. Michael's, Cornhill, where his distinguished grandfather had been rector, though endorsed by Dr. Wrench, was unsuccessful. Early in the next year, having been ordained deacon, he obtained the curacy of Avington, three miles from Winchester, and took up his residence, while the curate's house was being rebuilt, at Itchen Abbas. The isolation of this country place and the want of congenial company, coupled with so great a weakness of the eyes that he was unable to read by candle light, made the cure distasteful to him, and he left at the end of a year. He did not depart, however, without mounting his characteristic high horse and demanding his stipend before it was due, thus eliciting from Mr. Gabell, who held the living, a letter which suggests that Finch's departure was caused by more than ennui. He returned to London, taking lodgings in Lower Brook Street, to serve the curacy of Hampstead. He was eager for a tutorship; he considered applying for the Chaplain Fellowship at Balliol. Without priest's orders, however, as his father frequently pointed out to him, it was difficult to get preferment of any kind. By Christmas, his father was congratulating him on his success in being appointed to Maidstone. His cure there did not begin until midsummer, and plans were set on foot, through Dr. Yate, for his ordination by the Bishop of Gloucester or the Bishop of Winchester. But there is no record that the ceremony was performed.

Finch went to Maidstone the latter part of June, ac-

accompanied by a pupil—"my young Gerunder"—Joseph Bockett, the fourteen-year-old son of close friends.¹ Joseph proved a diligent pupil and a congenial companion; he retained a strong affection for his tutor, and in 1828 he asked Finch to marry him.² They took pleasant apartments on the High Street. They found living very dear, and Finch was doubtless glad to eke out his annual stipend of £75 by his pupil's fees. He was charmed by the country around Maidstone and took long and varied walks with his pupil. His time was fully occupied with teaching Joseph—twenty-nine lectures a week, he wrote in one letter—and with the duties of a large parish. There were in the year, he said, about 140 marriages, 400 christenings, and 250 burials, of which it is presumed he performed his share. He undertook the reorganization of the parochial library. He preached, both in the spacious church of All Saints which accommodated a congregation of twenty-five hundred and, he wrote, "gives ample scope to the loudness of my voice,"³ and at the barracks of the Forty-third Regiment. Two of his sermons were printed⁴ and were briefly reviewed in the *British Critic*.⁵ He liked his superior, Mr. Reeve, but patronized him as a worthy parish priest, a great talker, a slightly ludicrous figure in black spatterdashes, and—temporarily forget-

¹ Finch told one friend that Mr. John Bockett was a peer, but that he had declined to take up his title because of poverty. It has been impossible to verify this statement.

² It is, in one sense, a matter of regret that Finch had no son, for he was evidently at his best with young boys. Bockett, Lord Carmarthen, and Henry Mayer all accorded him a strong filial affection.

³ d. 23, p. 168.

⁴ The Crown of Pure Gold/and/Protestantism our Surest Bulwark,/ being the Substance of/Two Discourses/Delivered in the/Parish Church of All Saints,/Maidstone;/the first on Sunday, October 22,/the second on Sunday, November 5, 1809./By the Rev. R. Finch, A.M./Of Balliol College, Oxford./Maidstone/Printed and sold by J. Blake, etc.

⁵ *British Critic*, XXXV (May, 1810), 583-84.

ting his Divine Master's trade—a man of surprisingly good manners for the son of a carpenter.

Indeed, he looked down upon the whole society of Maidstone, a town of about eleven thousand inhabitants. "Contemptible is the society," he wrote to Ben Cheese, "of a country town, when one has been accustom'd to the elegant and literary circles of London, for which cards and scandal are but a wretched substitute."⁶ On his own showing, he even refused the acquaintance of the neighboring gentry and nobility because the difficulty of getting back to Maidstone after evening parties was too great. It may be, however, that the reason lay in Lord Barham's avoidance of an introduction, apparent or real, at which Finch took umbrage.⁷ In July, moreover, there was an exchange of insolent letters between Finch and Lord Romney on the occasion of a trespass on his Lordship's property by two of Finch's friends. Finch records, "I have fram'd and glaz'd [his letter], as a document of titl'd rudeness and vulgar ignorance."⁸

On the whole, in spite of real or fancied slights, Finch enjoyed his experience at Maidstone. He really liked to be busy—he was never a slothful man—and he felt his powers challenged as they had not been at Avington or Hampstead. His vanity was tickled by the homage paid him; there is evidence that the traditional feminine adulation of a personable young bachelor curate was not wanting. Yet he cast envious eyes at the tutorship in Lord Charleville's family which his friend Ben Cheese had refused. He evidently had a genuine love for teaching; moreover a tutorship, he felt, was the surest road to preferment. He was longing for larger opportunities than

⁶ d. 23, p. 157.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 249. Finch's snobbery frequently showed itself in this inverted form as well as in his claims to noble birth.

Maidstone offered. He had taken his M.A. in 1809, he had published his sermons, he had been elected Fellow of the Antiquarian Society; he was ready for preferment of some sort. He might, he hinted to a friend, be appointed Bampton Lecturer at Oxford.⁹ Then, too, Perceval, who had been his father's friend for twenty-five years, had attained the highest office in the government. "So little P," wrote his father, "is *prime-Minister*. What do you expect from him? I presume, a Stall w^d satisfy you: politically speaking, I think, He will have enough to do to keep his Station."¹⁰ Perceval was apparently ready to do something for his friend's son, for on March 18, 1810, Robert wrote to his father that he was coming to town, at Mr. Perceval's request, to meet Sir Charles Arbuthnot, the first Secretary, at the Treasury Chambers.¹¹ What this meeting was intended to lead to, we do not know; there is no informative answer to this letter. Thomas Finch, after a brief illness (though he had written early in February that his constitution, like that of England, was declining), died on March 23.

Robert's grief was sincere and deep. It took certain practical forms. He was responsible for the obituary tribute in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and he commissioned a bust of his father from the sculptor Nollekens. Mrs. Finch was pathetically stricken and helpless. Her son, however, enabled by his inheritance from his father to leave his country curacy and become a man of leisure, did not join her in Great Ormond Street but continued to keep his lodgings at No. 9, Lower Brook Street, devoting himself to reading and study.

Although determined not to resume clerical duties un-

⁹ He was asked to preach a university sermon in St. Mary's Church on January 3, 1813.

¹⁰ d. 7, ff. 19-20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, f. 27.

til he had obtained a distinguished appointment in the Church, Finch did not abandon his effort to secure a tutorship. In 1812, through the good offices of Dr. Fly, he went to Eton as tutor to Lord Carmarthen, the thirteen-year-old heir to the sixth Duke of Leeds. At first it seemed a happy association, but Finch soon tired of the atmosphere of Eton. Moreover, his temperament would not down, and by September he was dismissed. A firm and angry letter from the Duke, speaking of Finch's objections to interference respecting Car's health and his "Conduct respecting the Horses," which had greatly upset Her Grace, was followed two days later by a gentler message from the Duchess.¹² She was not less sure, however, that Finch should not return to his charge, not because of the accidental cause of disagreement, but "it is solely on account of the *peculiarity of your disposition*, which you *not only shew*, but *confirm* by telling us you cannot live comfortably at home or elsewhere . . . you have told us all your pride & petulance is extreme." And so, though Car is attached to him, she agrees with the Duke that their son should not run the risk of imbibing in any degree the irritability, the loftiness, and even the occasional gloominess (the sequence is hers) caused by Finch's sometimes being displeased at what he should not. Yet the gentle Lady bore him no ill will: she continued to write him friendly letters, giving him family news, inviting him to visit them, sending him £20 with which to buy for her, when he went on his grand tour, any foreign articles that would look odd in England. She also advised him, in order to make his hair grow, to have it cut shorter, never to pinch it with irons, and to rub deer's suet on his head: her butler, who was quite bald, could now, after using deer's suet, leave off his wig.

¹² d. 10, ff. 332-33 and 334-35.

After this debacle, Finch returned to Lower Brook Street. He had previously made inquiries regarding the requirements for a B.D. degree,¹³ but he never proceeded further. Restless and unhappy, he determined to go abroad, and in the spring of 1813 he sailed for Lisbon. He remained there until October, spending laborious days visiting and studying the various points of interest in the city and its environs, writing elaborate descriptions in his diary, daily reading and commenting on some passage of Scripture, learning Portuguese, going to bed early but sleeping poorly, tormented by pain and bad dreams. He visited the convent belonging to the order of De Sales, a friend, Miss Weld, being Mother Superior of the convent at Shipton Mallet. He passed occasional "convivial evenings" at the English College, where he was once "introduced to the Noble Lords as—'A very noble and most pompous gentleman of illustrious and ancient family'"—a description which he records with amusement, but without seeing the full extent of the unconscious humor. Some of his new acquaintances were Americans, and he seriously considered a voyage across the Atlantic, but he gave it up because he might throw odium on his American friends and might even be made a prisoner of war. He met Major Marlay and conversed with him about the Sixteenth Light Dragoons, "a very fine corps"—the first expression of interest in a regiment which he later adopted without their consent or even their knowledge.

His most pleasant and lasting friendship was made on the stormy voyage back to England in October. One of his fellow travelers was Signor Pallavicini, a cultured Italian of noble birth, who had spent six years in America

¹³ See letter from John Parsons, Master of Balliol, and at this time Dean of Bristol, d. 13, ff. 104-5.

and was then on his way to England to engage in business. Finch took him to Lower Brook Street as his guest, and an intimate friendship ensued. Finch was to speak of him later as his very dearest friend and to visit his impoverished family at Lucca with emotion. Pallavicini and his compatriots in London increased his interest in Italy. Finch introduced him to his own circle, that which included the Wells and Wheeler families, in which the returned traveler was assuming a new superiority by reason of his new experiences and interests.

For about six months Finch remained in London. He lived the life of a man of leisure, enjoying the society of his friends. Occasionally he preached for Dr. Charles Burney, "giving much satisfaction," but he made only one faint attempt to secure a living. As one of the fruits of his Lisbon sojourn, he wrote for the *Gentleman's Magazine* a defense of the Portuguese artist, Sequeira,¹⁴ as well as some other articles.¹⁵ He reviewed Eustace's *Travels in Italy* for the *British Critic*¹⁶ and considered the possibility of becoming connected in some capacity with that magazine. He visited picture galleries, going frequently to see Turner's exhibitions. He met Turner at Mr. Wells's, but found him "no gentleman in appearance, or in manners."¹⁷ He apparently fell in love with Clara Wells, who executed botanical drawings for him and who admired him excessively, but whose heart had perhaps already been given to Thomas Wheeler. How deeply Finch felt, it is difficult to say. She remained "my sweet friend Clarissa," to whom he wrote comfortingly when she had been jilted by Thomas Wheeler and with congratulation when she married him after all. He kept

¹⁴ LXXXIV (Part I, March, 1814), 222-23.

¹⁵ The memoir of Finch (*ibid.*, C [Part II], 567-68) calls him an occasional contributor.

¹⁶ N.S., I (March, April, 1814), 246-63, 386-401.

¹⁷ e. 6, f. 14.

up a correspondence with them and saw them frequently when he returned to England in 1827.

Another girl flits like a wraith through the diaries and correspondence, but she never, as Clara did, becomes real flesh and blood. There are no letters from her. Her name was Charlotte Thompson, but she was apparently not related to Maria Thomson,¹⁸ whom he married in 1820. She was real enough to rouse Maria's jealousy. Finch refers to her, in trying to allay Maria's suspicions, as "my dear friend, & once my ward."¹⁹ Her name appears occasionally in his diary, but we learn little about her, for either the passage is scored out or the pages that follow are entirely removed, perhaps to save them from Maria's eyes. Through the scoring it is occasionally possible to read such a phrase as "my beloved and tender Charlotte."²⁰ From a letter to Clara we learn that Charlotte was in Vienna in 1817 and that he was sending her his beautiful Arabian horse.²¹ But the horse, whatever Charlotte was, appears to be a myth. Her name does appear in his "Address Book," in Maria's handwriting. And we get a charming glimpse of a girl who must be she, pictured by Finch, in Polidori's Diary: "A ward of his gave a masquerade in London upon her coming of age. She gave to each a character in the reign of Elizabeth to support, without the knowledge of each other, and received them in a saloon in proper style as Queen Elizabeth."²²

Of Finch's mental attitude during these years between his father's death and his final departure from England there is ample evidence in the diary. Harassed by continual ill health, an unconfessed but obvious sense of aim-

¹⁸ Maria's brother spelled the name with a *p*.

¹⁹ d. 7, ff. 43-46.

²⁰ e. 7, f. 83.

²¹ d. 7, ff. 58-59.

²² *Diary*, ed. by W. M. Rossetti, p. 180.

lessness and futility, a belief in his mother's cruelty, and perhaps the pains of two unhappy love affairs, he dallied with thoughts of retirement into a monastery and of death. His contacts in Lisbon with the fathers of the English College and the nuns of the Convent of De Sales and his later friendship with Pallavicini had interested him in Roman Catholicism. Sister Mary Sales Weld hoped strongly that he would become a convert. Later, in Italy, he cultivated the acquaintance of the Roman Catholic clergy. He lamented the disunion of the Church of England from that of Rome, talked with his friends of his desire to enter a monastery, and wrote in his journal that he must bear vexation until he could "resolve to make the grand sacrifice of entire self-devotement to the great friend of a wounded spirit . . . divorce myself from an irritating world, and court unbusy peace in the hallowed repose of a Carthusian cloister."²³ Although he looked upon his own early death as another possible solution of his problems, there is no indication in his diary that he contemplated suicide. The following passage from a letter written in 1817 to Clara Wells bears, especially in its context, signs of the familiar exaggeration. Yet his statement may well be true.

You know that I can judge of your state by the degree of madness to which Mrs. Finch's base and cruel conduct drove me some time before I left England. You know much that I then suffer'd, you do not know all. I now tell you in confidence that I loaded my pistols with a double charge; and for two days seriously deliberated upon self-murder. I am indebted to you for my present existence, since the receipt of a letter from you suspended at that time my determination. May it have suspended it for ever!²⁴

²³ e. 6, f. 92.

²⁴ d. 7, ff. 58-59.

IV. THE COSMOPOLITAN RAMBLER

HE FOUND, however, a better cure for his sorrows and his restlessness than either suicide or a monastic life: he again went abroad. On April 28, 1814, in company with a Captain Riboleau and a Mr. Spurrier, he sailed for France. It was to be, though he did not then realize it, thirteen years before he saw England again. After three weeks in Paris he wrote in his diary, "I entertain thoughts of living abroad entirely, and selling my books and all goods in England, so as to become a perfect cosmopolitan Rambler."¹ A few months later he wrote Webster to begin negotiating the sale of some of his books, but he retained his lodgings in Lower Brook Street and some of his possessions until Lady Day, 1819.

Finch and his two companions entered Paris on May 3, very soon after the triumphal entry of the King of France. By cutting through back streets, they arrived at the Pont Neuf in time to see the procession. They secured places on the balcony of a coffeehouse for the "trifling sum" of five shillings for the three. With enthusiasm and emotion and with many details Finch describes the events of this day, "A day that I never can forget! An epoch in my life." After many bands of soldiers and statesmen and women had passed,

I saw a beautiful balloon now rise from the bosom of the Seine, which, as I could view none of the apparatus, had a most enchanting effect. It rose majestically, and seem'd

¹ e. 8, ff. 30-31.

as if it was intended to convey a swift messenger to bear to other climes the news of this happy day, as it soon rapidly soared out of my view. The messenger was Madame Blanchard, who stood in the car, and gracefully wav'd her lily flags, as she trusted herself to the regions of air, which smil'd upon her enterprise, as not a cloud was to be seen, but all was serene and tranquil. Heaven approv'd the deed of this day. My attention was now diverted, and new emotions were awaken'd by the beautiful plumes of the white horses which drew the royal car, waving on the top of the bridge. Soon it approach'd: every eye was turn'd towards it, and I believe every heart entertain'd the same feeling. Oh that I could have been in a little cabin, accompanied only by my own feelings, or by such a friend as my beloved and tender Charlotte, whose refin'd sensibility would have felt and understood all the sublime morale of a scene so overwhelming as this. My companions might feel, but their's were common and transient emotions. They had not the finely combin'd results of a statesman's, a philosopher's, a theologian's, and a patriot's reflections upon this grand & impressive occasion. . . . A very large body of the National Guard clos'd a procession, which any man of strong feelings, of deep reflection, of fine taste, or of an intelligent mind, who had seen, could surely never forget.²

Finch spent two busy and interesting months in Paris, marred only by occasional lack of consideration of himself. His two companions paid no attention to his observations—those of a statesman, philosopher, theologian, and patriot. With a letter from Charles Burney, he called upon M. d'Arblay, but found him out. Five days later, having heard nothing from him, he wrote an insolent letter in French, reproving him for his bad manners. On the morrow M. d'Arblay called, but he did not “seem to be a man of much etiquette.”³ In spite of such slights, to en-

² e. 7, ff. 80–86.

³ e. 8, f. 99.

dures which he prayed for patience and forbearance, he enjoyed Paris. With his customary meticulousness he studied and described buildings, pictures, and statues. He went to the theater, dined in famous cafés, visited a noted gambling house where he saw General Blücher and his son, witnessed an execution, and bought a dog.

At the end of June he set out for Italy with Pallavicini, who had met him in Paris. From then until the end of 1816 he kept steadily moving. He went by boat to Sicily and back, looking longingly at Elba, but never reaching it. He visited most of the cities of Italy, spending the longest periods of time in Rome and Leghorn. Although his health was never robust, he covered an amazing extent of ground and minutely examined and even measured an astonishing number of ruins, churches, and art galleries. He constantly extended his acquaintance with Italian artists and savants. In Genoa, in September, 1814, he recorded his creed as a traveler:

A traveller who would wish to reap real benefit from his excursions will make a point of becoming acquainted with men of art, letters, and science in each town or province that he visits. . . . From such men he will inform himself accurately of the state of learning in each country, and from their united opinions added to his own observation he will be able to establish a correct opinion upon the government. . . . By such a society he will gain much, and more than if he staid at home. But in gay circles he will learn nothing.⁴

With such principles, he went seriously about the business of meeting university professors, church dignitaries, directors of museums and galleries in every city which he visited and of winning election to various small Italian academies. Although most of his observations are con-

⁴ e. 11, ff. 75-76.

cerned with personal relationships or with actual books and works of art, he occasionally comments on the general state of art and letters in Italy. He was particularly impressed in Pisa by the lack of encouragement given to culture by the Italians, so that almost all artists and men of letters were attached to the French government, which patronized every literary and scientific undertaking.

Some lighter company he kept. At Cuneo in March of 1815 he found Signor Pallavicini and messed with the officers of the local regiments. It must have been about this time that Finch adopted the title Lieutenant Colonel.⁵ By June, when he left Rome, he had a military passport, which then and later he found useful in exempting him from customs inspection. By the time he went to Greece in 1817 he had acquired a uniform.

His new dignity, however, was not free from annoyance, for people would perversely insist upon questioning his right to it. In Leghorn, in November, 1815, the British Consul expressed skepticism.

. . . you proclaim from the housetops of Leghorn [wrote Finch] that I have had nothing to do with the military profession, and that I am a *priest*, as I understand you express it. Upon my word, Sir, you are too profuse of your titular Compliments . . . Those who best know *me*, know my right to a title that I bear, but I shall e're long probably convince you, or any other conjecturers, that my trade has been rather that of a Soldier than a Priest. Yes!

“I’ll shame them all, and print it.”⁶

In Athens, in 1817, in reply to a similar charge, he summoned all the English in the city, the consuls, and some

⁵ See letters from Clara Wells and Thomas Webster, d. 17, ff. 9–10; d. 16, ff. 137–38.

⁶ d. 7, ff. 36–37. The whole letter, which is preserved in the form of a copy in Finch’s own hand, is a marvel of pompous, truculent insolence.

others to a meeting and produced "the irrefragable documents, which I fortunately possess, which are; my passport, fifteen English letters, and my bills of exchange." He spoke to the assembled company for a full hour and "gave Mr. Gropius [the Prussian Consul] that severe & cutting chastisement, which he deserves." ⁷ By this time Finch had convinced himself of his military dignity and apparently believed those documents "irrefragable." The legend of his military career was growing in clarity and fullness in his own mind. In 1819 he wrote Eliza Thomson, "When in the army I us'd always to be call'd the *Peace-maker*, and when in command I have prevented many a duel by timely interposition between my subaltern officers." ⁸ But people would ask embarrassing questions, even Maria, and he found it necessary to be specific. "If ever Capⁿ Dingley knew me," he told Eliza in 1820, "it was probably when I was attach'd to the late Lord Grey or Sir Eyre Coote, when I was a little time in the 16 Dragoons, which, I hope, will satisfy the lady's vast curiosity." ⁹ Unfortunately for his story, neither Lord Grey nor Sir Eyre Coote appears to have had anything to do with the Sixteenth Dragoons. The skepticism of the Shelleys and of Westmacott has already been recorded. Repeated challenges must have broken down poor Finch's defenses. He ended his days as the Reverend Robert Finch, and he offered to Crabb Robinson two rather lame excuses for having assumed the military title: "He came to Italy many years before with some dispatches— And carrying these found it necessary as he sometimes said to take the title of Col^l—he once told me the title was given him by mistake and could not be laid aside." ¹⁰

⁷ d. 20, ff. 47-48.

⁸ d. 7, ff. 43-46.

⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 49-52.

¹⁰ Dr. Williams Library Robinson MSS, "Reminiscences," 1826-33, f. 58. Unpublished.

Finch's first visit to Rome was an experience of great happiness. At the end of the diary which records the first ten days of his stay, he wrote:

Thus have I brought this volume to a conclusion in the city of the Seven Hills; a city, which I have always entertain'd a fervent desire to see from my earliest youth. . . . Every clinging recollection of boyish days; and the trifling, yet fondly cherish'd incidents connected with them; all the events of an interesting period of more matured life spent at the University; the reflections which have occurred in a yet more recent and a more complete acquaintance with ancient history, and the beautiful writings of the classic authors; all incidental observations upon taste in the fine arts; all these occur to the contemplative & active mind at every step that one takes in the ancient Metropolis of the world. It seems a kind of foretaste of that pleasure we shall feel in another world (if we are found worthy) from an amalgamation of the purest, sublimest, and most just ideas convey'd to us thro' different channels in this alloy'd scene of virtue & vice, happiness and misery. As then our knowledge will be perfected, so are our classical notions corrected in visiting these interesting scenes.¹¹

It is the Finchian version of Byron's "Oh Rome! My Country! City of the Soul." We forgive its pompous banality as we turn the pages of the diary, a veritable guidebook to the Holy City, illustrated by hundreds of prints, and realize the anticipation with which Finch set forth each morning to study the pearly gates and golden streets of his Paradise and the enthusiasm with which he returned each evening to put into words his experiences and his emotions. The words may be dull and pedantic, but the emotions were real and lively. Here is the genuine Finch, in touch with a beauty and a reality which banished for a time his posturings and his make-believe. For

¹¹ c. 15, ff. 177-78.

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this delight he declined introduction to "a charming literary society," choosing not to go into any company until he had finished his researches in the city.

He had, however, early sought out Canova, the sculptor, who lived not far from his lodgings. Evidently he went without an introduction.¹²

I paid a delightful visit to the justly celebrated Chevalier Canova, whom I found in his studio not far from my abode. The outside of his house is easily discern'd from their [*sic*] being a number of bas-reliefs and fragments of antient statues inserted in the walls. I was pleas'd at meeting with an amiable, highly modest, sensible man, who receiv'd me in a very friendly manner. His manners are not polish'd, but are simple and naturally good. In his works the Amateur finds an ample field for amusement and instruction. I saw a magnificent colossal statue of Religion, intended for St. Peter's, the largest modern statue ever modell'd. A groupe of the three Graces for the Duke of Bedford; a part of a monument the composition of which is highly original and extremely happy. The anatomical marking of one of the figures is exquisite. The naked statue of Napoleon; a noble work of art. The sitting statue of the Empress, whose face is very far from any thing handsome. Another of her mother. A colossal statue of Ferdinand King of Sicily; and various other works, finished, or in progress.¹³

Some intercourse was kept up between them: Canova paid him at least a farewell visit before he left Rome,¹⁴

¹² Cf. e. 11, f. 76: "The best introduction is your own. If you are a man of learning, curious & communicative, you will always be well-receiv'd; better than if you carry a formal letter, which is consider'd merely as a matter of course, and your acquaintance is thought no honor, whereas, if you seek spontaneously an intimacy with a Savant, he considers himself honor'd by your notice."

¹³ e. 15, ff. 63-64.

¹⁴ "In the evening the Chevalier Canova paid me a valedictory visit. He means to go to England, when he has completed the group of the Graces for the Duke of Bedford. I am more and more pleas'd with the

and wrote for him a letter of introduction to the Director of the Belvedere Gallery in Vienna, speaking of Finch as an illustrious English traveler, cultured and learned, a lover of the fine arts.¹⁵ There are records of an exchange of letters in 1816, but none of Canova's is preserved.

Finch had taken apartments, the day after his arrival in Rome, at No. 26, Piazza di Spagna, later to become Keats's last home.¹⁶ They were kept by Signora Anna Angeletti, niece of Vasi, who had a magazine of books and prints near-by, and evidently the same as the "brute of a landlady" who tried to make Severn pay for the broken crockery.¹⁷ Finch paid 19 scudi a week for four rooms elegantly furnished, apartments "like a small house, there being no communication, so that I am quite independent and perfectly quiet."¹⁸ He found the sound of Bernini's boat fountain "peculiarly agreeable."¹⁹ The picture he draws of the landlady differs from that of Severn:

The neatness, which distinguishes every thing about the Signora is truly charming; and is rare in this country. Her husband has been some years in Portugal, and has quite neglected her. She is a lively, smart, handsome little woman, and has two nice daughters, who scarcely appear younger

manners of this eminent Sculptor. His monument in Saint Peter's is very much injured in it's effect by the figures of Religion and the Genius being misplac'd, but an objection was rais'd against that of Religion being plac'd on the left side." (e. 17, f. 11)

¹⁵ d. 4, ff. 44-45.

¹⁶ Now the Keats Shelley Memorial.

¹⁷ Sharp, *The Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, p. 96. The receipt for the rent of Keats's piano was signed by Anna Angeletti. See *Bulletin* of the Keats Shelley Memorial, No. 2.

¹⁸ e. 15, f. 63. He does not say on which floor his rooms were; they may have been the whole floor of which Keats and Severn occupied a part or that above. The landlady's rooms communicated with those of Keats.

¹⁹ e. 16, f. 60.

than their mother. She has much taste for the fine arts, & draws and engraves.²⁰

He corresponded with her for several years, but not, unfortunately, at the time of Keats's tenancy.

Finch shared a landlady also with the Shelleys.²¹ In Leghorn, where he went in June, after leaving Rome, he lodged with Mme Merveilleux du Plantis in the Via Ferdinanda and later moved with her to the Strada dell'Angelo.²² In 1819 she was keeping a lodging house in Florence, at which the Shelleys and Claire were staying at the time that Percy was born and where Sophia Stacey met them. Charles Clairmont evidently fell a little in love with Louisa du Plantis, and Claire was especially friendly with her. Mme Merveilleux, who was frequently in distress of some kind,²³ poured out her troubles verbally and in letters to Finch, who, with his usual lavish expenditure of sympathy and time for those who appealed to him, did his best for her with worrying house owners. She confided her history to him almost at once:

I have taken an apartment [he wrote] in the Via Ferdinanda with Madame Mervielleux [*sic*], whose husband is Captain of a frigate in the service of Louis XVIII, and a Knight of Saint Louis. Her sister married Mr. Longmate of Plymouth, whose sister married the present Lord Torrington. Her first husband was a Mr. Partridge, a medical man. After his death she married M. Marveilleux [*sic*]. She now supports herself and two little daughters by teach-

²⁰ e. 15, f. 60.

²¹ And also with Byron; see below, p. 54.

²² Although he did not like the new apartments, he did not wish to deprive her of the revenue from his rent.

²³ See Mary Shelley's letter to Mrs. Gisborne from Florence, Dec. 28, 1819 (Bodleian MSS Shelley c. 1, ff. 351-53): "Mad^{me} M. might go on exceedingly well & gain if she had the brains of a goose but her head is a sieve [*sic*] & her temper worse than wildfire it is gunpowder & blows up everything." From the context, there is little doubt that this refers to Mme Merveilleux, though other conjectures have been made.

ing, in which she meets with many annoyances, being not treated by the vulgar and feelingless English here, as she ought to be.²⁴

In Leghorn, where Finch remained from June until the New Year making brief excursions to Pisa, Lucca, and Spezia, there was far less than at Rome to absorb the antiquary and the art observer. He lived a more social life. He spent many hours with M. Schultesius, the Lutheran minister, with whom he had "much literary and pleasing conversation" and who cited "Göde, or some such name of the Author of the Sorrows of Werter, as the purest & the most classical writer in the German language."²⁵ Schultesius introduced him to Mr. and Mrs. Mayer, Germans by birth, and their sons. In the youngest, Henry, then thirteen years old, Finch took a strong paternal interest. He made the boy his close companion and presented him with a "handsome gold repeater" as a reward for some scholastic triumph. They read and studied together, they walked about the city, they went on an excursion to Pisa. When Finch was stricken with an especially severe attack of ophthalmia, Henry wrote his diary at his dictation and was his "faithful nurse and surgeon." At the end of the year, Finch offered to take Henry with him to Rome and Naples, but his parents deemed the plan imprudent because of the boy's health. Finch misinterpreted their motives, and an estrangement ensued, which lasted until a chance meeting with Henry at Lucca in 1820 gave an opportunity for explanation and reconciliation. In 1825 Finch disclosed to Henry his intention to provide for him, when

²⁴ e. 17, ff. 32-33. Whether her first husband was related to the Mr. Partridge then in Leghorn, the sun-worshiper, does not appear. See f. 227 and, for another Partridge, ff. 224-25.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 250.

possible, a life of scholarly leisure. Mayer was at that time acting as tutor to the sons of the Duke of Württemberg, an engagement which was to last until 1829. In 1827, after his mother's death, Finch rewrote his will, making provision for Henry, and both he and his wife expressed their pleasure in the thought that he would one day be a member of their household. That day came sooner than had been expected. The death of Mr. Mayer recalled his son from Stuttgart in 1828, and later in that year he went to Rome to become nominally Finch's secretary, actually his adopted son. Henry Mayer, or, as he was better known, Enrico Mayer, had later a distinguished career in Italy in the field of education, a career which Finch's benefactions, in some degree at least, made possible.²⁶

Another family with whom Finch was on intimate terms was that consisting of Mr. and Mrs. John Gisborne, later the close friends of Shelley and his wife, and Mrs. Gisborne's son, Henry Reveley, the engineer in whose plan to build and run a steamboat Shelley invested interest and money. Finch first mentions Gisborne in September, saying, "I have convers'd much with Mr. Gisborne, a well talented and well inform'd man, upon mathematics."²⁷ On October 2 he called upon Mrs. Gisborne and met "a certain Puccini," probably the grandfather of the famous composer, who accompanied her on the violoncello. Finch found Mrs. Gisborne a woman of original ideas, who thought much. He talked with Mr. Reveley on mathematics. When he returned to Leghorn in 1817, he renewed his acquaintance with them, was much interested in Reveley's small steam engine, and

²⁶ See E. R. P. Vincent, "Robert Finch and Enrico Mayer," *Modern Language Review*, XXIX (1934), 150-55; and MSS in the Bodleian and Dr. Williams Libraries.

²⁷ e. 17, f. 241.

called frequently, sometimes in company with the physicist Professor Gatteschi, for whom Henry had made a model of his engine. Mr. Gisborne and Finch maintained a cordial correspondence for about five years, at least, and saw each other frequently in 1829 in Rome. Except for a few notes about borrowed books and invitations to dine, the last letter preserved from Gisborne is that which elicited the account of Keats's last days on which Finch's fame, as far as the Keats-Shelley circle is concerned, has rested. Finch was the one person in Rome whom Gisborne knew well enough to ask for news, and he sent a letter so full of enthusiasm for the young poet that Finch, who had scarcely been aware of him before, resolved to read his poems.

In spite of pleasant company in Leghorn, Finch was becoming restless. He had talked vaguely of going to Africa, but he went no further than talking. He was kept in Leghorn by the necessity of being in close business touch with England, where his affairs were in some tangle, never clearly explained. When, at the end of the year, he was presumably free to do so, he set out for Florence, where he remained until the last of March. Through the summer he was in Switzerland, and he was back in Turin by the eighteenth of August. These months were comparatively uneventful, except for the meeting and almost daily intercourse with Ugo Foscolo in Zurich from April to July and the excursions with James Wathen in June and July. By October he was in Milan being entertained by Monsignor de Brême. It was at the latter's table that he met Byron and Hobhouse, with whom he exchanged calls here and in Venice and from whom he, having decided to visit Greece, obtained some letters of introduction. The absence of an extended journal for this period deprives us of any record of Finch's

impressions of Byron. Nor have Byron and Hobhouse much to say of Finch. Polidori describes him as "Colonel Finch, an extremely pleasant, good-natured, well-informed, clever gentleman; spoke Italian extremely well, and was very well read in Italian literature. . . . He mentioned to me that Nelli had written a Life of Galileo extremely fair, which, if he had money by him, he would buy that it might be published. . . . Finch is a great admirer of architecture and Italy." ²⁸

Byron's letter to the Vizier at Prevesa, although the Greek interpreter had great difficulty in reading it "from the badness of the writing," ²⁹ procured Finch a courteous welcome. He thought much about Byron on his way to Prevesa:

He should not waste his talents any more upon mere tales and light pieces of poetry. He is capable of writing a fine tragedy. But he must correct his style, and get rid of the affectation of Sternesque poetry. Inuendos [*sic*], pauses & hyphens should be sparingly employ'd by the poet. As us'd by Byron they pall and are like a play full of murders and fainting fits, or a horse taught to curvet secundum artem. His Pegasus has got an awkward trick of starting.³⁰

Finch undoubtedly quoted himself to this effect later, when talking of Byron. He certainly claimed a greater intimacy than existed between them: he reported to

²⁸ *Diary*, ed. by W. M. Rossetti, p. 180. Polidori says that Finch was accompanied by Wotheron, an artist who sketched the places he visited. Rossetti says (p. 174), "Mr. Wotheron is spoken of later on under the name 'Werthern.' Neither of these surnames has a very English aspect, and I cannot say which is correct." Probably neither is correct. This must be Polidori's error for Wathen. No such person as Wotheron is mentioned in Finch's diary. But he was much in company with James Wathen, and Wathen visited Byron in Venice in this year. Incidentally, Finch must have been sorry to miss Polidori's "shindy" in the theater; he was away from Milan at the time.

²⁹ d. 19, f. 23.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 19.

Crabb Robinson a bon mot of Byron's uttered to Ward in his (Finch's) house, though chronology makes such a meeting of the three men difficult; he wrote to Clara Wells, advising her not to live with her in-laws,

Here, as I have told my dear friend, Lord Byron, was the rock, on which *he* split. He should never have permitted his wife's *companion* to have accompanied her into his house. That unprincip'l'd woman is the remote cause of Lord and Lady Byron being perhaps made unhappy for life.³¹

Byron's reaction to such a remark, if it were indeed made, is perhaps better left to the imagination.

Finch and Francis Lee left Venice on December 4 for Greece. After a pleasant, leisurely journey, including stops at Ithaca and Prevesa, they reached Lepanto. Prevented from entering the port by the chain drawn across it after sunset, they disembarked on the beach and spent the night in the hovel of a peasant. This was Finch's only close touch with primitive living during his tour. But his eye was open to the picturesque. He shared a smoky room with his traveling companions, his servant, and his host.

Our supper, as may be conceiv'd, was none of the best, but a fowl was not to be found fault with, except as being too *unique*, for we could very well have devour'd one or two more. As we sat round the fireplace, the wood blazing on the hearth, and two dim lamps hung on each side, partially illuminating this smoke-dried apartment, I thought that Wilkie might have selected this as a fit subject for his animating pencil. A dog and two cats added to the group of figures, and no doubt of fleas, while the female part of the family three in number, whose persons and whose dress

³¹ d. 7, ff. 58-59.

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harmoniz'd most aptly with the scene, did not lie down to repose, but remain'd in attitudes somewhat like those of ladies leaning over urns in tombstones, except that we must substitute for an elegant Grecian vase an oil-jar or an old chest.³²

At Scala they took horses for Salona; they visited Delphi, where Finch wrote a Latin poem, later to be polished and printed at Pisa; and they proceeded after ten days to Athens by an overland route, with no more serious accident than the breaking of the handle of his canteen. With his usual prolixity he records his antiquarian researches or the varied hospitality and insolence of Turks and Greeks. On March 2 they came in sight of Athens, which was to Finch a second glimpse of Heaven. "Arrived at ATHENS," he records in his summary diary, and, more at length:

We advanc'd towards the city in perfect silence at a slow pace, as if treading on holy ground; and scarcely a word was spoken by any of the party after leaving Chasha. When I approach'd nearer the city, and saw the Acropolis towering above it, sublime, variable, and imposing, the rapid recollection of the epoch's most fam'd in it's history presented itself to my mind at almost one glance. I compos'd then the following lines, expressive of my overpowering sentiments.³³

The reader may be spared the Greek verses that follow, on the theme, "See Athens and die!"

Finch's stay in Athens began auspiciously with courteous welcome from M. Gropius, compliments for his Greek epigram on Lord Elgin, and comfortable lodgings with Mme Macri, widow of the English consul and mother of Theresa, Byron's "Maid of Athens." Of her and her sis-

³² d. 19, f. 83.

³³ *Ibid.*, f. 150.

ters he wrote the day after his arrival that they were "call'd sometimes the three Graces, but they are not so graceful or so beautiful as to merit this appellation, but they are good-looking & good humour'd, and also better educated than the generality of Greek females. The second, nam'd Catherine, is the most prepossessing."³⁴ But he soon exhausted the sights of the city and also, it would appear, the patience of its inhabitants. His landladies were insolent and left him without service for two days;³⁵ M. Gropius refused to let him have money, because he did not know his English bankers; he was insulted by an invitation to a ball by a man who had not called upon him; he was disgusted with the frivolity of the English residents; he was bored, waiting, with little to do, for letters from Constantinople which would permit him to proceed; he was troubled by reports of the plague, which was raging in the Near East. Above all, as we have seen, his military rank, even his identity, was challenged. It was with "no small pleasure" that he left Athens on June 5, arriving in Constantinople just one month later, after a voyage uncomfortable only because of light and occasionally contrary winds.

Among Finch's letters is one to Clara Wells, dated Constantinople, July 7, two days after his arrival in that city. It is folded, sealed, and addressed to "Miss C. A. Wells," but it bears no marks of having been sent through the post. On the thirtieth of May, before he left Athens, he noted in his diary the receipt of a letter from

³⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 152.

³⁵ In a month they had become "ces femmes ignorantes." The story of their "conduite insolente et même barbare" is set forth at length in French in the diary for April 2 (d. 19, f. 162). He reports later that "Lord Byron offer'd to make Theresa his mistress, and to pay down £500, but the offer was rejected, because made in too public a manner. A Mr. Leslie is suppos'd to have been more successful. Both these were desperately in love!" (d. 20, f. 62)

Clara announcing the breaking of her engagement to Thomas Wheeler. On the thirty-first he says: "I wrote to my ever-valued dear friend, Clara, and I hope that I have comforted her wounded heart. . . . This long letter, and many an anxious thought about my dear friend have occupied me the whole day." ³⁶ Now the letter of July 7 is long (four large folio pages, closely written and crossed), it is in response to Clara's news of her broken engagement, and its obvious purpose is to comfort her wounded heart. He could scarcely have written two such letters. Excerpts from it deserve quotation, for, in addition to the falsification of date and place, it contains, in its accounts of his safe and comfortable journeyings (faithfully summarized above from his diaries) some of the gallant Colonel's finest imaginative flights. It begins:

You will perhaps accuse [excuse?] me of delay in not answering your letter dated Dec'r 30, when I tell you that I receiv'd it the day before yesterday, before I had arriv'd an hour in the capital of the Turks after a long, perilous, and wearisome journey. So anxious was I to receive news from the most estimable and most esteem'd friend that I possess, excepting my beloved Charlotte, that I flew to my bankers to welcome the letters of you both; and for some days before, my Arabian Horse, although swift and fiery, could not keep pace with my impatience. I walk'd home faster than beseem'd my beard and Turkish dress, and almost lost a slipper by the way. Had a Turkish friend address'd me, I believe I should have sworn at him in plain English. . . . Since you last heard from me I have suffer'd an immensity of fatigue. Resting forty hours without food; expos'd eleven days and nights in an open boat perpetually filling with water in a boisterous sea; and riding four days

³⁶ d. 20, f. 41.

and nights without intermission are the occasional taxes
I have paid for my curiosity, but, thank God,

“The mass shall be sung,

And the bells shall be rung,

For the knight is come from the holy land!”

. . . These last four months I have travell’d alone in countries, where the foot of man seldom treads; where the scenes of nature inspire rather than divert melancholy, where danger and difficulty meet the pilgrim at every step, where I have been lull’d to sleep by the cries of jackalls, and awaken’d by the stings of poisonous reptiles; which, in Syria, abound to a degree almost incredible. . . .

[Charlotte] is at Vienna. My letter to her goes accompanied by a present of an Arabian horse, which I have great difficulty in getting out of the country, he is so very beautiful. If you could see him, you would admire him, and I am sure you will love him, because he once carried his master 180 miles in less than 24 hours, and has saved his life more than once. . . . To Vienna I shall *probably* go, but when, or by what route is uncertain. I want to undertake another expedition Eastwards and I also wish to fulfil my promise to the Emperor Alexander in paying a visit to his capital.³⁷

Finch did not immediately undertake another expedition Eastwards, nor did he go to sojourn in the Palace of the Czars.³⁸ He remained in Constantinople and Pera until the middle of September. His diary is crowded with accounts of antiquarian expeditions in and around the city, copies of epitaphs, data about the people, the food, the flora and fauna, reports and rumors and opinions about the plague. On August 29 he set out for Bucharest

³⁷ d. 7, ff. 58–59.

³⁸ Alexander appears nowhere else in Finch’s MSS except in the “Address Book” (e. 24*), where he is entered under *A*: “Alexander, Emperor of Russia,” to keep company, perhaps, with, under *F*, “Francis, Emperor of Austria,” and, under *K*, “The King”!

with a firman signed by Sir Robert Liston, the English Ambassador.³⁹ But halted in the Gulf of Kara Bournon by bad weather and put thoroughly out of liking with the proposed journey by witnessing the wreck of several boats which tried to enter the harbor, Finch decided to go back to Pera by land and gave up Vienna to return to Leghorn with Mr. Feise, chief clerk of the banking house in Constantinople. They embarked on the Brig Betsey on September 16 and, making excellent progress, arrived in the harbor of Leghorn on the morning of October 6. Finch was immediately clapped into quarantine, where he remained, bored and fretting, until November 15.

The next two months and a half he divided between Leghorn and Pisa, avoiding the Mayers because of their "narrowness of mind" in regard to Henry, but renewing acquaintance with the Gisbornes and other old friends and making some new ones. He considered Lieutenant Bayley's proposal that he go with him to Egypt in the spring. He printed his Latin verses on Delphi, which were "very much admired by all here" and translated into Italian by Mme Gatteschi. He attended Professor Gatteschi's lectures on physics and worked over an "academic memoir" on the gold medal of Panticapaea. And the journal, the last to be preserved except the summary diaries of 1829 and 1830, ends on January 31, 1818, with a conversation with Sydenham Malthus,⁴⁰ brother of the great economist, with a torrent of rain and a gale of wind. From this date forward the record is far less full and less certain.

³⁹ d. 10, f. 395.

⁴⁰ Introduced to Finch by Henry Elliott. See d. 5, ff. 309-10.

V. HUSBAND, PATRON, AND COLLECTOR

AT SOME TIME in 1818 or early 1819 Finch met, at Pisa or Florence, Dr. Thomson and his two sisters, Maria and Eliza. In June, 1819, when Finch was at Pisa, Dr. Thomson, who was in poor health, was staying in Florence in the house of Niccolo Palmerini, Finch's close friend, and Palmerini was meeting the two charming ladies. In March, 1820, Palmerini wrote to Finch at Pisa, expressing his regret at the "fatal news" about Dr. Thomson and sending his condolences to the Misses Thomson. By November 17 Finch was married to Maria and spending his honeymoon at Colline. The ceremony had taken place a few days before at Lord Burgersh's house in Florence at nine o'clock in the morning.¹ These few facts, all that are to be found in unprejudiced documents, throw little light on the courtship. The wooing must have been stormy and difficult. "I may indeed well be proud of her," Finch wrote to his mother, "for perhaps no woman was ever so difficult in making choice of a partner."² Maria had evidently been sensitive and restive, skeptical of his protestations and of his stories ("she accuses me of travelling to the moon"³), jealous of Charlotte, afraid of his tendencies to melancholy and to dictatorialness, not wholly convinced of his unselfishness. Her family in England had been inquisitive and doubtful. Eliza served as go-between for the unhappy lovers, copying and sending to Finch letters from Maria, receiving in re-

¹ See Lord Burgersh's note of November 12 (d. 3, ff. 95-97).

² d. 7, ff. 60-61.

³ *Ibid.*, ff. 43-44.

turn letters—which she presumably passed over to her sister—wherein he recapitulated and deplored Maria's "incomprehensible conduct," which in any other woman he would call "detestable, cruel, and unjust caprice."⁴

When eventually Maria laid aside her scruples, Eliza had her reward: in spite of his advice to Byron and to Clara Wells, Finch gave his wife's sister a home for the rest of her life. She seems even to have gone on their honeymoon with them. Later another sister, Mrs. Amelia Dingley, made her home with them, and toward the end of 1829 Finch invited Dr. Seth Thompson,⁵ Maria's nephew, to come to Rome to establish himself in practice there.

Maria's father was Frederick Thomson, Esq., of Kensington. She was the eldest daughter in a large family, having at least three brothers, two of whom were physicians, and two sisters. Maria was apparently a skillful amateur artist, painting chiefly water-color landscapes, and a woman of taste and charm. "If virtue, prudence, affection, good-sense, extensive learning, refin'd taste, vivid imagination, and complete accomplishments," wrote Finch to his mother, "can make a desirable wife, such a wife, I can say with truth, is mine. All those who know her I have found to be of the same opinion with myself."⁶ Letters from Finch's friends support him in this statement: even Westmacott, in the heat of his anger, paid her a tribute of respect. Crabb Robinson found her "a genteel woman who has also a word to say abo' 'Shakespeare & the musical glasses.'" ⁷ He had seen her as a young woman in 1812 at the meetings of the Attic Chest Society, a small literary club which met at Porden's

⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 49–52.

⁵ Seth and his father spell the name thus.

⁶ d. 7, ff. 60–61.

⁷ Dr. Williams Library Robinson MSS, Letters: 1827–29, f. 163.

house.⁸ The artists respected her taste. Her own letters to her husband reveal a lively, affectionate nature.

Her misgivings about his temperament, however, were not wholly groundless, and their married life was not completely smooth. Ill health on both sides doubtless irritated irritable tempers, and possibly a little jealousy on Maria's part of Finch's affection for Henry Mayer contributed to occasional quarrels which Finch recorded laconically in his diary and which Maria elaborated in her letters. She seems usually to have had the right on her side: in England he talked to her and to others of keeping three carriages and four horses, but now he has told her that he cannot keep even one; he shuts himself up to work on his Catalogue so that she and Eliza have to communicate with him, though in the same house, by notes; he locks up all the books on the arts and will not trust her with the key. Such were the frequent small irritations. When a quarrel was made up, however, she wrote with evident affection to her "dearest Finch," and there is no doubt that she felt his death very deeply and mourned long and sincerely.

Finch's married life was spent chiefly in Florence and in Rome. They moved about from house to house, so that Maria wrote, in August, 1829, "We have been always resorting to expedients,—to substitutes for comfort—let us now embrace comfort in reality."⁹ They did settle down then in Rome in the Palazzo del Re di Prussia, which Finch secured through the good offices of Baron Christian Bunsen, then Prussian envoy to the Vatican, with whom he was on very friendly terms. Finch had the satisfaction of reporting on September 22 to Sir T. H.

⁸ Sadler, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, I, 376; II, 454.

⁹ d. 7, ff. 185–86.

Farquhar that "the King of Prussia has conferr'd upon me the favor of allowing me to inhabit a palace, which His Majesty has lately purchas'd here, and the offer was too tempting for me to resist." ¹⁰ If he gave some of his friends in England to understand that he was there on invitation, even rent free, it is not surprising.

In Florence and in Rome the Finches lived for the most part a quiet, pleasant, retired life. They had a large circle of friends including the Gisbornes and the Severns, Eastlake, Dr. Nott, Niccolini, Bunsen, Teerlinck; they entertained and were entertained. They maintained a lively correspondence with artists, writers, scientists, scholars in England and in other parts of Italy. Travelers were always arriving with letters of introduction from those who had formerly enjoyed their hospitality—Crabb Robinson, Miss Sarah Harriett Burney, Mme d'Arblay's sister, the son and the daughter of William Cobbett. In the summers they fled to the hill towns to escape the heat. Two years they spent in England, chiefly in London and in Bath, settling the estate after the elder Mrs. Finch's death, renewing old friendships and meeting new notables, such as the Disraelis, father and son, and Sir Thomas Lawrence. Finch wrote articles for periodicals, intervened to help friends in misfortune, occasionally mounted his high horse, and busied himself with collecting books and pictures, setting up in his house a small gallery, which he delighted to show to his friends and his friends' friends.

By 1828, to compensate for the weakness of his eyes, he had Henry Mayer to work with and for him. In spite of his poor health—he had had in 1822 a large tumor removed from his head, in 1824 he was suffering from "a determination of blood to the head," and he was con-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 191-92.

stantly submitting to being bled—there seemed no reason that he should not enjoy the Palace of the King of Prussia for far more than the six years of the original lease. At the end of 1829 he entered in his diary a record of the year: “Wrote letters. 321. Recciv’d letters. 342. Redd books. 224. Redd hours. 2420. Articles in C.P.B. [probably Catalogue of Pictures and Books] 10014. Wrote verses. 2831. Pages of diary. 434. Walk’d miles. 1542. Travell’d miles. 197.”¹¹ This, if we can believe our eyes—Maria once found difficulty in doing so—is not the record of a decrepit man’s activities. The entries continue in 1830, but in a somewhat shaky hand as the months pass. On September 4 he bought four horses. On September 7 he made his last record, except for two more days’ recording of the thermometer. Not many days later he caught a severe chill returning from Frascati in an open carriage in the rain, developed rheumatic fever, and died in Mayer’s arms on the evening of September 16. He was buried on the twentieth in the Protestant Cemetery, and the funeral sermon was preached by the Lutheran Minister of the Prussian Chapel, where Finch had several times attended service. This discourse was printed in at least two languages, English and French. The French copy in the Bodleian Library has on it the name of Finch’s old friend, Henry Elliott.

Over his grave Finch’s widow erected, in 1832, an impressive monument. In June of that year she wrote to Crabb Robinson of her harassing difficulties over “the erection of a fitting memorial of all I have lost, of him whom I can never cease to mourn.” The first person she employed so conducted himself that she was forced to make a change. For the epitaph she applied to an old and valued friend (perhaps Ewing, the sculptor who

¹¹ e. 18, f. 53.

made Finch's bust), but eleven months elapsed without her hearing from him. She then wrote to Dr. Nott, but her letter miscarried and was six months in reaching him. He was so fastidious in composition that another long delay ensued. At last Dr. Nott's epitaph and the long inscription for the back of the monument were put into the hands of the Inquisitor or Censor. That "unsympathizing priest" objected to the words "state of reward" in the epitaph and "genuine truths" of religion in the poem.¹² Upon an application by Bunsen to the Secretary of State, however, permission was finally granted.¹³ The monument, which was designed by John Michael Knapp, architect of Stuttgart, bears Dr. Nott's epitaph unaltered, but the word "sacred" is substituted for "genuine" in the poem.

And so Robert Finch lies—it is a bit ironic—within the same walls that surround the ashes of the two poets who carried his name into literary history. His monument attracts the eye of the pilgrim who enters the gates of the cemetery; but few pause to look at it, for nailed to a tree about twelve paces in front of it is a sign:

Shelley's Tomb
At the base of the tower.

¹² It was only about ten years since funerals in the Protestant Cemetery had to be conducted at night.

¹³ Dr. Williams Library Robinson MSS, Letters: 1832-33, f. 31.



TOMB OF ROBERT FINCH IN THE
PROTESTANT CEMETERY, ROME

VI. THE FINCH COLLECTION

THE VARIOUS PARTS of the Finch collection, which came into the possession of Oxford University in 1839 by a special arrangement with Henry Mayer,¹ are distributed among the libraries and the museums of the University. Of the books, some are in the Bodleian Library, some (those which are concerned with modern foreign languages) in the Library of the Taylor Institution. Among those in Bodley, the most interesting and valuable is a copy of the Pisa edition of Shelley's *Adonais*, which is bound in a volume with a number of other pamphlets, including Finch's own privately printed poems. The Taylor Institution also houses the busts of Finch and his father and the portfolios containing the sketches and engravings which he had collected, a few of the best of which have been removed to the print collection of the Ashmolean Museum.² In the Ashmolean are also the coins and a few of the oil paintings. The Northcote portrait of Finch's grandfather hangs in the office of the University Chest.

Among the paintings perhaps the most interesting, although unfortunately it is in such bad condition that restoration is deemed impossible, is Joseph Severn's "Ariel," the study for which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum.³ In the published accounts of Severn's life and

¹ See the Archives of the Bodleian Library.

² A pen and ink "Massacre of the Innocents" of the Veronese school has been published by the Vasari Society.

³ The study is reproduced in Sharp, *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, facing p. 272. James T. Fields at one time owned a copy of "Ariel" on a panel. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

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work no mention is made of the history of the finished picture. It is stored away in an upper room in the Ashmolean, hanging in a dark corner. Although the colors are dulled and the paint is chipped, the figures of Ariel and the bat are there, the outline of the peacock's feather can still be traced, and it is possible to realize that before the gold background was flaked off, the picture must have been one of beauty. The correspondent of the *Literary Gazette* described it as follows:

The small painting of Mr. Severn, of Ariel represented flying on the bat's back, and holding a peacock's feather, which forms a graceful crescent with its golden plumage glittering in the sun, is very fine. Ariel looks that arch little spirit so well described by Shakespeare. The depth of space over which he soars, and the immeasurable regions in which he is imagined to range, are happily expressed by the tone of the background. The flesh is well painted—the figure and bat in good drawing—and the subject being painted on gold gives great richness and effect to the whole. As to the composition, I would write in golden characters, that Mr. Severn has shewn poetry in every touch, science in every shade, and life in every lineament. Mr. Robert Finch has purchased this little gem, and possesses the original sketch.⁴

Finch had contracted for the picture before it was finished and had been watching its progress with interest. On February 26, 1830, he received a hurried note from Severn:

Pray come and see my Ariel—I am most anxious that you should see it, to decide between the extraordinary difference of opinion of Cav. Seguira [Sequeira?] & Mr. Eastlake.—

⁴ May 8, 1830. The manuscript of this article, endorsed "Grice," is in Finch's correspondence (d. 8, ff. 337-38). It differs only slightly from the published form.

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The latter thinks that it is my best work and insists on my not attempting the alteration suggested by Cav. Seguiria, as it would destroy all idea in it of the Venetian School.—Now I am inclined to think with Eastlake as in the first place the Cav. Seguiria does *not* approve of the Venetian School. He admires my picture greatly, but wishes me to throw an accidental shade on the figure from the bat's wing, which I have thought on, but cannot do it—My object is to show an effect of the last rays of the setting sun, illuminating all the figure in golden light like the Sacred Love of Titian.

I am wishing to put the finishing touches to it.—pray come today.⁵

Finch evidently was on the side of the aesthetic angels,—Severn and Eastlake. The finished picture, without the shade of the bat's wing, was exhibited in March. But on the twenty-first of that month Severn wrote to Finch:

My dear Sir

I am griev'd to tell you that our Ariel has been today excluded from the Capitol as an indecent picture—I write this to beg you will not say any thing against such an unjust act for the whole thing is unworthy *even* a thought.—I pity the men who can have such feelings.

believe me Dear Sir

Your obliged & disobt. Svt.

J. Severn ⁶

Crabb Robinson, however, heard a later explanation of the ban; he wrote in his journal for May 20:

From the Thompsons I heard an anecdote too rich and characteristic to be lost. . . . ["Ariel"] was rejected; first, it was said, for its indecency. At length the cause was

⁵ d. 15, ff. 26–27.

⁶ *Ibid.*, ff. 30–31. The communication to the *Literary Gazette* had been dated March 23.

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confessed; Cardinal Albani, the Secretary of State, had discovered in it a satire on the Romish Church. He interpreted the picture to represent an Angel astride over the Devil, but perceived in the peacock's feather the emblem of Papal vanity.⁷

Points of interest like this about "Ariel," although comparatively rare, were a portion of the reward for the task of perusing the seventeen volumes of Finch's correspondence. Many—very many—of the letters are dull and from obscure people. A large number are from Italian savants. The voluminous letters from Finch's family and from the friends of his London and Oxford days are valuable chiefly for the light they throw on Finch's own life and character. Only in those from the Burneys, father and son, do we approach greatness. There is a brief note from Charles Parr Burney telling of the death of his grandfather, the famous "Musical Doctor." A letter from Dr. Charles Burney shows that Finch had evidently suggested using the power of his own grandfather's name and association with Westminster Abbey. If it seemed presumptuous on Finch's part, Dr. Burney's note does not imply any reproof: "Accept my best thanks, and those of my Family, for your kind offer about W. A. Privacy is judged best, by my Sisters, who are residuary Legatees."⁸

Two days later his son wrote: "Our poor, lamented Relative is to be deposited within the Precincts of the College in the same grave with his second Wife."⁹

The British artists, scientists, scholars, and men of letters whom Finch met in Italy wrote to him of contemporary developments in their own fields, of social and political life in the England to which they had re-

⁷ Sadler, *op. cit.*, II, 128-29. ⁸ d. 3, ff. 285-86. ⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 287-88.

turned, of their own experiences, of mutual friends who are better known than themselves. Of these letters, as far as I know, only two have been published, those from Trelawny.¹⁰ Only a few of them deserve printing in full; but there is much of interest hidden away amid salutations, personal messages, thanks for favors received, and unimportant news.

The letters of Peter Elmsley, a classical scholar famous for his critical work on Sophocles and Euripides, tell the story of Sir Humphrey Davy's abortive attempt to unroll the papyri at Herculaneum. "You have probably heard," wrote Elmsley from Florence in May, 1819,

that Davy has invented a much better method of opening the Herculaneum rolls than any hitherto pursued. His plan is, to send an English chemist and an English scholar to Naples, and he thinks that in about a year, and for about £2500, all may be done that can be done at all. In consequence of some conversation with him, I have offered to play the part of the scholar, if the plan is adopted by our government.¹¹

A letter of August 25 reports the acceptance of the plan, and one from Naples on January 25, 1820, recounts the difficulties which they met:

This is the first day of my third month in Naples, and I really am unable to report any progress. Davy is quite indefatigable, but he meets with sad obstacles created by the jealousy of the present set of unrollers and interpreters, who are extremely unwilling to be superseded by us bar-

¹⁰ *The Letters of Edward John Trelawny* (ed. by H. Buxton Forman, 1910), pp. 127-30. They were called to Mr. Forman's attention and transcribed for him by Mr. C. F. Bell, Assistant Keeper of the Ashmolean, but Mr. Forman evidently never investigated the correspondence further. (*Ibid.*, p. xxiv.)

¹¹ d. 5, ff. 333-34.

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barians. They are not so jealous of Sir Humphry [*sic*] as of me. They say that they have eight critical scholars in constant pay and employment, and the deuce is in it if they want the assistance of a ninth from Oxford. Your friend à Court absolutely refuses to aid and abet without more explicit orders from home, and maintains, that *good offices* in ministerial language mean nothing more than an occasional invitation to dinner. I suspect that the affair will end in smoke, in which case I shall have a journey to Naples and back one hundred pounds cheaper than if I had come of my own accord.¹²

In these same letters are glimpses of the obstacles in the way of scholarly work in Paris and the results of professional jealousy:

I have met with a cruel disappointment at Paris. Professor Gail, *Conservateur des Manuscrits Grecs et Latins de la Bibliothèque du Roi*, being dissatisfied with me for not reviewing certain editions of sundry classical authors published by him, will not grant me permission to take the manuscripts of Sophocles to my lodgings; a permission seldom refused to respectable persons. I am not quite free from blame in my conduct towards the professor, but I own that I did not expect him to take so severe a revenge. I have been advised to apply to the Minister of the Interior through the British ambassadour. I have deferred this measure from day to day till it is too late. . . . The collation of the Parisian manuscripts of Sophocles must wait till some more convenient opportunity. I do not wish you to suppose that I have been entirely idle here, as I have constantly worked in the library during the hours that it is open to the publick, which are only four in the day. It is fortunate, that in this country holidays are not numerous as in Italy. Today is the only one which I have encountered since I came to Paris.¹³

¹² *Ibid.*, ff. 339–40.

¹³ *Ibid.*, ff. 335–36.

There is also an amusing picture of one of the noted German philologists of the time:

Bekker is now here, and I see him every day at the Laurentian in company with another barbarian, but I have not yet made even a bowing or nodding acquaintance with him. His appearance reminds me of Τάλος, a gentleman mentioned by Apollonius Rhodius, whose body was composed entirely of brass. He would collate me dead in a fortnight. . . .

Never dispute my knowledge of physiognomy. Since I wrote the first page of this letter, I have talked with a person who knows Bekker perfectly well, and who assures me, that he is not the son of a woman, but an ingenious piece of mechanism like Talos aforesaid. Bekker, if he were shown in England would be called (not the *Copying* but) the *Collating* Machine. I find that his companion is Brandis, whose business is to wind him up once in four-and-twenty hours, and to oil the wheels every Saturday evening. What does such an instrument cost, and where is the manufactory established? ¹⁴

By the letters of Thomas Hodgkin, the Quaker physician so long associated with Guy's Hospital, who gave his name to Hodgkin's Disease and who was interested in various philanthropic as well as scientific activities, Finch was kept informed of current progress in the sciences. From Paris, for example, in May, 1825, he wrote of experiments and reports before the Institute:

I believe that I mentioned in a former letter, some curious facts connected with magnetism, which had come under the notice of Arago. These observations have been followed up by others equally curious. Having found that the motion of the needle was impeded by a surrounding circle of copper or brass, which circle was at rest Arago conceived

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 333-34.

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that the needle when at rest might be disturbed were the circle to be put in motion. Experiment proved that his suspicion was correct. The same result was also obtained when the metal was placed either above or below the needle & in spite of such precautions as completely precluded the possibility of movement having been communicated by the air.

At another meeting of the Institute Humboldt mentioned some barometrical observations which as far as I could make out from his short statement, tended to show the existence of an atmospherical tide.

Some interesting observations have been made on the sense of hearing by a young surgeon connected with the asylum for the deaf & dumb. He has succeeded in several instances in procuring more or less considerable relief of deafness by injecting the internal ear from the Eustachian tube. One of the cases which he has detailed at the greatest length, is that of a boy on whom the effect was almost immediate & complete. It afforded him an opportunity of making some curious observations as to the steps by which this sense becomes an available inlet for the reception of ideas. A considerable time (some months) elapsed before the child, though he evidently heard, could distinguish the duration or value of sounds.

A laborious young anatomist here has succeeded in injecting the different parts of the nervous system, much more completely than had previously been done. I have not yet seen his preparations nor can I assert that he maintains that the nerves are tubular. Should this be his opinion I should certainly want strong evidence before I could become a convert to it.

I was at Cuvier's a few evenings ago, & had the pleasure of meeting three of the French circumnavigators who have just completed their voyage. I understand that they have formed a very interesting collection which will still further enrich the museums of France. In the voyage, which lasted about three years, they have been remarkably fortunate.

They did not lose a single individual. They visited many of the islands of the Pacific, & though this ocean is being continually traversed by British & American vessels they managed to touch at a well inhabited one which appeared to have been till then absolutely free from all intercourse either with Europeans or their descendants. The race of its inhabitants is below the ordinary size but is rather fine. Their language appears to be distinct from the Malay dialects spoken in most of the other Islands of the Pacific Ocean. They exhibited no signs of fear at the appearance of their visitors, not even at the report of their guns. Yet their manners were mild and inoffensive. Like the Loo-choo islanders they seem to be ignorant of War, but they are far from resembling them in their degree of civilization. They possess some remains of antiquity, but no signs of idols or of worship were discovered amongst them. Below the King there are several gradations of casts distinguished by punctilious etiquette. The servility enacted by the superiors even in this remote island so remarkably detached from foreign contamination seems to countenance the old definition of man *bipes tyrannus*. Geoffroy St Hilaire has since read to the Institute a memoir relative to this voyage. Having devoted an ample portion of his paper to the praise of the Sovereign & his family for sending out the Expedition, he could say but little of the individual species, with which the naturalists of the company have made us acquainted, but he read a long list of savants whose names having been conferred on them are to be introduced into the nomenclature of Natural History. In this list figured many of Geoffroy's confrères, then present. I know not what they thought on learning that they are consigned to the Pacific, in the forms of Medusas, fishes, reptiles & sea birds. This mode of translation confers a sort of immortality by changing the life of an individual for that of a species.¹⁵

¹⁵ d. 9, ff. 305-6.

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News of London, political, social, industrial, artistic, and literary, came back to Finch from his friends who had returned to England. Thomas Leverton Donaldson's ¹⁶ picture of the years 1824 and 1825 is particularly rich in varied detail.

[April 12, 1824] I see by the Papers that the Dutchess of Devonshire is dead: it seems a very sudden affair. Many will be glad of it but I rather think that there will be many a poor Italian, Artist & Antiquarian who will regret her loss—Rossini is still in England but is very little spoken of. His bad manners his excessive impudence arrogance & his charges have created a very general dislike against him. The opera which promised to be very brilliant this season as it open'd with very sounding Promises on y^e part of y^e Manager has had very little effective talent & the Colbran has been the Prima Donna!!! except in a few pieces when the Catalini has displayed her astonishing talents—She however does not excite such raptures as formerly and refuses to sing Rossini's music which has created a great degree of animosity between them and the Maestro frets & fumes but to no purpose. . . .

Were you in England you would be surprised at a new species of Literature or rather Literary Medium which has lately sprung up. When you & I quitted England—the tedious newspapers retailed the Fashions Chit Chat & Politics of y^e day while the labored magazines & reviews took under their monthly or quarterly inspection the weightier matters of literature. A host of weekly Pamphlets have now sprung up of 16 pages closely printed & embellish'd with one or more wood cuts price 2^d each. There are two Journals treating on Mechanics recording useful discoveries & some practical hints & introducing the vulgar to the mysteries of science in a plain unaffected style. To the lovers of

¹⁶ Donaldson was an architect and author. He was active in founding the Institute of Architects. From 1841 to 1864 he was Emeritus Professor of Architecture at the University of London.

the horrible there is devoted the terrific register whose name will immediately conjure up to the view Deaths of all descriptions—Eruptions—Earthquakes—Storms Shipwrecks & in fact every calamity by Sea or Land—The Medical world has a clever little work entitled the Lancet which contains much useful matter. Divinity has also its hebdomadal register in a work entitled the Pulpit which with Cobbetts register closes the list of the 2 penny productions—All these are useful (except perhaps the Terrific Register which contains but food for distemper'd minds) as they diffuse knowledge at a cheap rate, create an appetite for reading & convey intelligence at a very cheap rate to classes whose instruction has been hitherto little attended to— . . .

We are going on very well in England in a political sense & so rich that the great Capitalists know not how to employ their money. Project after Project Bubble after Bubble rises has it's day & then sinks to nothing. They have already begun upon London Bridge which is to consist of 5 elliptic Arches somewhat as here drawn. [*Sketch*] They are driving Piles. Scientific men profiting by the excess of Money in the Market are devising schemes which tend at the same time to public utility & individual profit & by this means we have some very useful projects in contemplation. There is one of a suspension Bridge near the Tower which will allow vessels of 200 Tons to pass up the River without striking their Masts. [*Sketch*] This sketch will give you an idea of what it is to be: it will be of Iron of course and about $\frac{5}{8}$ of a mile in length each arch 600 ft in span.¹⁷

[October 29, 1824] A Captⁿ Medwin has lately published (a week since) some memoirs of L^d Byrons containing a collection of anecdotes & opinions communicated by L^d B. to the Captain during their residence at Pisa— This book shews that the public taste is now arrived at that depressed state that they require the productions of a man that thinks

¹⁷ d. 5, ff. 148-49.

strongly rather than of him who thinks correctly— They are more in need of noxious stimulants than efficacious correctives— He seems to have been a man without religion & without fixed principles of honor or liberty—& highly vicious & profligate giving a wild loose to the more degrading passions of human nature—the sensual appetites—yet he seems to have been sometimes generous tho bordering on profuseness and alive to sentiments of liberty tho at bottom an aristocrat—¹⁸

[February (?), 1825] . . . The people in England seem completely mad with schemes for the formation of large associations of capitalists in schemes of every description. The famous South Sea Bubble of former days is acted over & over again— Speculators are continually failing & involving hundreds of others yet still the floating unemployed capital is so great as to make the money'd men undertake any speculation in the hopes of realizing some interest for their capital— We have 2 Steam washing companies—a bread company—a fish company—a milk company— In fact all the necessaries of life are now furnished by companies at reduced prices & they say goods of the best quality. Keane the Actor has lately been cast in a suit of Crim Con—Damages 800£ & they say the lawyers bills will be 600£ more. The public have considered it necessary to express a very severe opinion upon his breach of morals & indeed he appears to have behaved in this case with unjustifiable baseness. Every night he appears the House rise in arms the best Tragedies of Shakespeare pass off in pantomime. One hardly knows how all this will end but I suppose this expression of angry feeling will die away & he will resume his wonted influence on the stage— There is a sad dearth in the literary world nothing new is come or coming out & even the opening of Parliament excites no sensation whatever. Meat is rising in price very rapidly & they say will be enormously dear on account of the con-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, ff. 152-53.

stant rains which have caused the rot among the sheep. We have had no snow whatever in London only 3 or 4 frosty days & in fact we have throughout the season being [*sic*] enjoying an eastern climate—

[Eastla]ke [?—*paper torn by seal*] is returned from his Travels & we hope will soon [begi]n to digest his materials & put them into a [?] fit to meet the public eye. . . . Etty is rising high in the public esteem for color and composition he has been elected an Associate of the Royal Academy . . .

The failure in the construction of the Custom House here has caused a very great sensation. It appears that the pile driving in the foundation was very defective in consequence of which the piers have sunk oppressed by the superincumbent weight and many of the two tiers of groined arches supporting the floor of the long Room have given way & gone by the run [?]—The walls they say threaten ruin & it is supposed that the damage may be from 60 to 150,000£. The profession are in sad consternation at the disaster which is not only a terrible loss to the country but a sad disgrace to the Architect—¹⁹

[April 7, 1825] . . . The Government seems to be taking great interest in the embellishments [*sic*] of the Capital & the progress of the fine Arts— We have now in the walls of S Peters our debates upon taste— A new Academy is to be built for the schools of arts & Halls of the Annual Exhibitions— Great discrimination is used in the choice of designs for the public Edifices— Mr. Soane our Professor of Architecture has for 3 nights thrown open his House & gallery to all the world divided into 3 classes, first night the Grandees—2 night Friends of a lower Cast & the last 600 of all sorts Artists & others pell mell— It was a scene of enchantment— Every Room had its appropriate light, blazed in all the splendor of numberless lamps or receiving a spare light presented its objects thro the medium of a

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 154–55.

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solemn twilight Here were Drawings—there pictures—a variety of the most choice casts arrested the attention in another part—but the central point of attraction, the grand wonder of wonders, was the Belzoni Sarcophagus—A large oblong Egyptian coffin which Mr. Soane has purchased for 2 or 3 Thousand Guineas of one single piece of material like alabaster transparent & covered inside & out with myriads of hieroglyphics— The Catholic question is gaining ground—bets in the city (the true test of public opinion in that quarter) are that if it do not pass this Season it will before two years— A Company is establishing for the purpose of opening a more extensive commercial intercourse with Egypt & which like the Levant Company in the Archipelago should cultivate more decidedly our relations with Mahomed Ali . . . The new Exhibition of the British Artists in Suffolk Street is open but is very mediocre indeed— Haydon has attempted Portraits but such vulgarity of grouping expression & character is a libel on the individuals he represents. A fine dream by Martin attracts great attention. It is the Maker dashing thro "*th' expanse immense*," envelopp'd in clouds, dividing the elements, consolidating the Earth, bidding the sea retire within her proper limits, harmonising the course of the starry spheres, & regulating the due influence of the Sun & Moon—²⁰

[August 19, 1825] . . . Among all the projects now afloat that of street cutting is the most popular. Mr. Nash has published the scheme of a new Street from Charing Cross to the British Museum. The reason for this has been that 2 years ago the Parliament voted 40,000£ p^r annum for 5 years to erections in addition to the British Museum to form a complete Library, Museums of Natural History, Antiquities & Medals. The nobs at the West end enraged that so many good things should be so far Eastward made

²⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 158–59.

a great noise in Parliament. The Government anxious to justify their proposition in Parliament desired Mr. Nash to form an ample & noble access thereto as the West enders complained that they could not get at the museum at all— A very spirited satire appeared in one of the Monthly Magazines representing Mr. Croker (the grand objector) as about to start with Mr. Barlow upon a voyage of discovery to ascertain where Russell Square is situate— They represent him starting from the Admiralty & taking in stores— They proceed on their voyage and at the bottom of the Haymarket meet My Lord —— who bouts ship in order to convoy them part of their way and quits them at the end of Picadilly— At the further end of Coventry Street they throw out a champagne bottle to shew they are going on well— In time they reach Bedford Square & thinking themselves arrived at their journey's end they dispatch a footman to enquire & learning their mistake proceed onwards. Arrived in Russell Square they give an account of the Inhabi[tants], their language, dress, manner, hours & modes of living which is very amusing. [?] Bloomsbury comes in for it's share. Inquiring of the Inhabitants of Russell Square [about?] Bloomsbury Square they say that they have heard of such a place but know nothing other than that it is somewhere to the South they believe. However to return to the subject. Mr. Nash's plan being imperfect I have published a supplementary plan & since that I have been employed by parties with 2 other individuals to form a project for a new Street from Bloomsbury (connecting with Mr. Nash's plan) to the Waterloo Bridge thus affording ready access to the Theatres, Covent Garden, & the Strand from the Northern quarters of the Town. This business now occupies much of my time. I am also appointed Architect to the G^t Westminster Dairy Company, who are executing works to a great amount under my direction.²¹

²¹ *Ibid.*, ff. 160–61.

This state of prosperity, however, did not last, and these great projects soon came to an end. Thomas Jefferson Hogg wrote gloomily in April, 1826:

We have been all ruined & undone in England (I speak of the men) by the prodigious failures of Bankers; there is neither money, nor credit, to be had: every thing is at a standstill, no persons are busy, except the political economists, who are employed in finding out a reason, & inventing a theory, to solve the commercial phenomena; an employment as profitable as that of physicians during a plague, who dispute, whether the fire, the air, the earth, or the water be to blame.²²

And four years later, in July, 1830, Finch heard from John Disney, who, although his chief hobby was adding to the collection of classical antiquities at his place, "The Hyde," in Essex County, took an active interest in politics and later unsuccessfully stood for Parliament:

But I am come home at a most interesting period—I wish you were here to enjoy the increasing strength of whigish principles—the very basis of which is (in my estimation) this single-dictum—"That all government is, *solely*, for the good of the Governed"—this is gaining strength every day—the toryism & jure divino-doctrines of former days—are going:—the tendency now is rather too much towards the other way.—and you will soon hear no more about Tories and Whigs—But "Whigs and Radicals"—the former will be considered as the "*high* party"—for they are attached to aristocracy much more than the *Rads*. Our county election is now, soon, to take place . . . and no candidate will go down who is not an advocate for economy—the promises and disappointments, in this respect, of the last Session have roused the country in a most surprising degree; and nothing will appease the distressed and starv-

²² d. 9, ff. 360-61.

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ing population but retrenchment;—which you will see, will be the tone of the *returns*;—what the parliament, when met, will do, time only can shew . . . The new King is very popular; but seems to be rather too much excited, by his elevation. Some fear is entertained that he may suffer a similar attack to that of his father.²³

Some thirty letters from Ambrose Poynter, an architect, one of the foundation members of the Royal Institute of British Architects, letters closely written and crossed, extending in time from 1821 to 1830, furnish detailed information on his own career, on the successive exhibitions of the Royal Academy and of the seceding Society of British Artists, on the studies and achievements of other architects and the small but able group of water colorists. Many of his letters, like those of Donaldson and Westmacott, are illustrated by sketches. James Pennethorne, planner of many London streets and public buildings, his knighthood still far in the future, writes of his architectural studies in various parts of Italy. James Wathen, who wrote travel books and illustrated them himself, sends Finch letters written in a shaky, almost illegible hand, revealing in every line, still strong just before his death, a zest for sketching and for living that must have made him a delightful companion to Finch in Switzerland fourteen years before. William Brockedon, painter, author, and inventor, sends him an account of his varied career and a series of comments on pictures which he has seen. Severn writes of his own painting and pays his tribute to Titian:

Now that I have been studying from Nature in her own Pavillion [*sic*]*—the open Air—I seem not to have half look'd at Titian's Works.—In my "Mind's eye" while I am*

²³ d. 5, ff. 130–31.

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here in the wide presence of Nature, they appear the greatest and deepest felt works in our Art— In every sublime appearance which contains the most extensive natural principles, I am reminded of Titian,—yet never by those things, approached [*or* approachable?] by the visible means of Art.—he must have produced these works, from a religious intercourse with God— ²⁴

Lewis Vulliamy, eccentric architect and brother of the famous clockmaker, Benjamin Lewis Vulliamy, writes from Ancona:

Will you do me the favour to tell Severn (when you see him) that begging his pardon I think the painters in General a set of confounded Asses & nincompoops—that instead of travelling over the Country studying the character & diversities of form &c of human nature under diff^t Circumstances they become mannerists & imitators from always poring over & copying old Pictures instead of directing their attention to the originals from which they were copied—we saw the finest heads, old men, children, groups, varieties of expression, of beauty, fine form, Costume, & attitude amongst the inhabitants of the Towns & Country where we have been, especially so amongst the Concourse of Country people assembled at Loretto on Palm Sunday.— ²⁵

Westmacott recounts his experiences in the Museum at Naples and reports his activities and those of his famous father, of Severn, and of Thorwaldsen and Canova:

Having visited Naples you must be aware of the quantity of work there is for an Artist in the Studio as well as at Portici and Pompeii. I recollect your speaking highly of the Aristides, what a fine thing it is! I certainly think it one of the very best statues we have—another favorite of mine was a head of a Fragment in the Flora room, there is not more of it than I have sketched, [*sketch*] the top of the head is cut or broken off, but with all its sufferings and

²⁴ d. 15, ff. 3-4.

²⁵ d. 16, ff. 70-71.

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faults I think it by far the sweetest representation of female beauty I ever saw—it is the size of nature [?], the number 203— Among the Bronzes I thought the Mercury carried the palm— The Callipiga Venus made me think of one of your good stories of some Johnny raw— Cav^r Arditì who is chief of the Band of old women called Directors, two days before my departure caused that Statue to be removed from her situation in the Gallery into a Cabinet which is almost always locked, his reason (if reason it may be called) was its being too *scandalosa* to be seen by the public generally! I found great illiberality prevailed among the aforesaid old Ladies inasmuch as that they would not permit me to draw or make any memoranda from anything that was unpublished, among them my beautiful female head, tho' I got locked in one day by accident & made a sketch of it, out of 2099 vases I could only draw from 11, and excepting one rotten, rusty, battered & unintelligible piece of Gk armour I was prevented bringing away the slightest memoranda of any of their fine collection of Helmets, Cuirasses, Greaves, &c &c. This is no slight grievance for an artist who travels so far for the sole purpose of getting what is not published, & what he cannot by any means get at home. I cannot express how much disappointed I feel about it— I have however made a great many scraps & sketches which I hope I shall find useful—

Canova has just finished the model of one of the finest groups in Sculpture—the subject is the Virgin supporting & Mary Magdalen hanging over the body of Christ; for high finish, attention to nature, truth of expression & arrangement of light & shadow it must I think rank as his best work, it has a few of the Canovesque peculiarities but as a whole it appears to me a very superior performance— Thorwaldsen has finished a superb model for a statue of Potoski, the upper part of the figure naked, the rest to the knees classically draped—he also exhibits two Apostles which are very fine and an unfinished model of Christ which is full of dignity united with an expression of the greatest

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mildness—Severn has painted a sketch of his intended Picture of Alexander, it promises well, he has begun a cartoon of it full size from which he will paint the large picture—he has also been engaged in copying at the Vatican and Capitol—my Father wrote me a short time ago that he was pressing his business at the Academy & that he hoped something would be decided in regard to his receiving the Pension at a general meeting to be held on the 1st of Dec^r so that we are anxious for the accounts— . . . I had almost forgotten to tell you a piece of news that you as a well wisher to the fine Arts will I am sure be glad to hear—the English students have established an Academy for the study of the best living models that can be procured, I feel proud at being the proposer and with Mr. Eastlake the most active in *setting it going*; we muster under a dozen and met for the first time last Monday; who knows but that our little beginning may lead in time to something of consequence—we are all as vain of it as possible, poor Mr. Lane is not well enough yet to join us— . . . The King has given my Father a commission for a colossal Equestrian Statue of his late Papa to be erected at the end of the long walk, Windsor,²⁶ it will be executed in bronze—he also mentions that a site is at length fixed for a cast he has made of the Statue by Phidias on the Quirinal Hill—it will be placed exactly opposite the Horse Guards on the Parade in the Green Park, occupying the present situation of the Great Mortar which will be removed—the statue is cast in Gun metal, Government having allowed those taken from the enemy to be used, the subscriptions for defraying the expenses are by Ladies who call it a “Compliment to the Duke of Wellington” those Guns only being used which have been taken in his battles—²⁷

Most interesting, however, to the student of the literary circles of the early nineteenth century are the

²⁶ According to the *D.N.B.* this statue is in Liverpool.

²⁷ d. 17, ff. 115–16.

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letters of John Gisborne, Charles Armitage Brown, and Thomas Jefferson Hogg, known chiefly because of their association with Shelley and Keats, and of two men who have a right to be heard for themselves as well as for their friendship with the great: Leigh Hunt and Henry Crabb Robinson.

Gisborne's letters are not, in themselves, very interesting. From them it is clear, as one has always suspected, that his wife had far more brains and wit than he. But the references to two contemporary poets are worth quoting. When the Gisbornes had returned to England in 1820, Shelley wrote from Henry Reveley's study in Leghorn,

You will see Coleridge—he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre, and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind,
Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair—
A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
A hooded eagle among blinking owls.

And on June 24 they did see Coleridge. On the fifth of February, 1821, Gisborne wrote from Leghorn to Finch:

We saw Coleridge at the house of Mr. Gilman, whose wife, a very agreeable and amiable person is sister, I found, to a Miss —— [*sic*] ²⁸ whom you particularly mentioned to have known at Pisa. Coleridge is much altered in person—he has the appearance of a man of Seventy—his hair is perfectly white, and he is grown large and thick— We gave him all the good reasons we could think of why he should set about translating the Faust of Goethe—he is perfectly aware that he is the only person capable of doing it justice:

²⁸ Miss Harding? See Coleridge, *Letters* (ed. by E. H. Coleridge, 1895), II, 703.

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but he has reasons against the undertaking which we could not overcome—²⁹

Mrs. Gisborne recorded the visit in very similar terms in her journal, adding:

He should like to translate the *Faust*, but he thinks that there are parts which could not be endured in english [*sic*] and by the English, and he does not like to attempt it with the necessity of the smallest mutilation.³⁰

The only other letter from Gisborne to Finch which is of special interest is that which elicited Finch's frequently quoted reply on the death of Keats. On May 30, 1821, he wrote from Leghorn:

I had heard, before your letter reached me, of the death of poor Keats, and the news could not but occasion me the greatest pain, as I had been several times in company with that amiable being during the last summer. I much wish that it had been in my power to have known the details of the very distressing circumstances with which, I have been told, his death was preceded and accompanied; but unfortunately I had no means of obtaining this melancholy information— You were on the point of quitting Rome, and I knew no one else there, to whom it would not have been ridiculous to have addressed myself on such an occasion. Whatever papers he may have left behind him, are probably no longer in existence. I believe Keats had not reached the age of twenty five, and when the extraordinary merit of his works is considered, it will scarcely appear credible that most of his poems were written near five years since. Critical malignity contributed not a little to the depriving

²⁹ d. 8, ff. 228–29.

³⁰ Ashley Library, 3262. Unpublished entry for Sunday, June 25, 1820. Shelley, like the Gisbornes, thought Coleridge should translate *Faust*. See *Works*, Julian ed., X, 371. See also E. K. Chambers, *Coleridge* (Oxford, 1938), pp. 265–66.

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the world of this gentle and amiable man— His powerful mind had, for some time past, inhabited a sickened and shaken body— He had to contend with feelings that must ever make a fine nature ache for its species, tho' it should disdain to do so for itself.

The other evening I walked into the woods at an hour when the nightingales were warbling forth their native strains— The remembrance of poor Keats fell upon me most vividly— I fancied that I was listening to his requiem, and by degrees my mind had almost taken the melancholy hues, which his had once reflected in the following pathetic lines, which form a part of his inimitable Ode to a Nightingale,

Darkling I listen ; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath ;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
 In such an ecstasy !
Still would'st thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !
No hungry generations tread thee down ;—

In his last publication there is a fragment, entitled Hype-
rion—this (I must say) unequalled modern production an-
nounces the full maturity of the richest poetical genius. No
reader could possibly guess that it was written at the age
of twenty— The great characteristics of the poetry of
Keats are energy and voluptuousness—they present them-
selves both singly and united : but, in their union they com-
bine a high feeling of humanity which is not common to the
best of our authors.³¹

³¹ d. 8, ff. 234-35.

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An undated, hand-delivered note is the only communication from Charles Brown which mentions his friend:

Dear Sir,

My poor Keats will surely accompany me in all my ramblings, whether to Rome or to Mecca. As for a copy, I'll be hanged if I think I can make one,—but this may be attempted,—I did begin one for L. Hunt, but it still remains begun and no more.

Your's most truly,
Cha^s Brown.

Wednesday morn^g ³²

But Brown is a sprightly letter writer: his lively anecdotes and his comments are worth quoting:

Venice. 19th September 1823.

My dear Sir,

You are a grave gentleman and no jack-pudding. How then could you commit your gravity into such unholy keeping as our's? Never speak, far less write to make another laugh. Wot you not that he who setteth the world a grinning loseth the world's respect? Thou shouldst ever be serious as an Alderman before his turtle soup, or as an old man making love to a young woman, or as a young man scolded by a rich uncle, or as a donkey at work, or a pig asleep, lest thy character should not be held in respect. At thy approach men ought to be chop-fallen, women should behold thee with a distant awe, and boys should look up in thy face demurely as at their schoolmaster's. . . .

22nd Sept^r. Why this letter was not finished off hand, is more than my idleness can account for. But, be it known, I have much to do in these our Venetian lodgings. In the first place the Landlady's tongue is to be kept in order,—no trifling task. Then as she is a bad cook, I am obliged

³² d. 3, ff. 12–13. The reference is undoubtedly to the drawing which Brown made at Shanklin.

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to be a good one. Severn is astonished at my right down English dinners. He, and Mess^{rs} Etty & Evans, dined yesterday with me on a boiled leg of mutton, caper sauce, and carrots. What d'ye think of that? And all admirably cooked I assure you. 'Twas I that scraped carrots & cut capers, and mine was all the praise. Talk indeed of *my* supper-appetite!—why I nibble like a mouse in comparison with these canvas-gentry, who ate as if they had not been blessed with dinner or supper since they began to brush in Italy. On Sunday (29th) we shall set off, please the pig of S. Anthony, and glad shall I be to be out of this stinking, gnat-tormenting city. Severn & I send our Comp^{ts} to Mrs. Finch & Miss Thompson, and hope they had fine weather for their second jaunt to the Camalduli,—and I

call myself your's sincerely,
Cha^s Brown.³³

Florence. 12th January 1826.

. . .

I suppose you have heard of Mr. L. Hunt's arrival in England. He is going on in a very prosperous manner, though Mrs. Hunt, who will never have done, brought him an eighth child soon after they arrived.

. . .

You have put me in an agony,—“a horrible murder, and the fall of part of the Pincian hill!” I must know the particulars. Pray send them, for my sake, for the sake of my “Italian Chat,” and for its readers' sake. My No. 3, which must be sent off about the 20th is sadly behind hand. “If I provoke you,” quoth your worship, you promise to send me grand news. I do provoke you,—I dare you to do it! Is that enough? . . . Ha! my dear Bianca Capello! Would you believe it?—L. Hunt persuaded me not to proceed with it, saying as how that such sort of romances were not the thing. I'm now sorry I listened to him; and intend to turn

³³ *Ibid.*, ff. 14–15.

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my researches to some account in giving a short history of her, which is quite a romance by itself. Such a romance I sent off lately!—very short, but very shocking,—a horrible Dwarf;—there are love, murder, madness, a shrieking dream, the Carnival at Rome, banditti, Cardinal Gonsalvi, a mysterious mask, an awful spy, and death by a slight wound in the left shoulder.³⁴

Pisa. 19th June 1826.

When I left Florence all the town was agog about a hermit, who was saying prayers with a beard a foot and a half long, and performing miracles an age and a half too late, all on the top of a hill to the south of Fiesole, about five miles off. I had not time to pay so long a visit, though as curious as others to see the would-be Saint pop down on his knees to run over the litany, which, I was told, is his method of receiving company. Since I came here, I've heard a little more about him. The odour of his sanctity smelled so strongly at Ponte a Sieve, that the people there, not many days since, became tumultuous on his account. The miracle that had the best effect was that of the Angels' providing him with sand for the building of his little chapel in a wood. Now, whether this was specially offensive, as it represented the blessed orthodoxical Angels as belonging to the Order of Masons, or whether it was merely thought necessary to put a stop to the farce, I know not; but lo! the holy Hermit has had an action brought against him for having vaunted of working miracles, or of their being worked in his favour,—it's all the same. When I return, I must busy myself in this matter, for it will be worth witnessing, as of course the Angels will turn Advocates in the cause,—and then I shall know, what I never yet could comprehend, the precise meaning of an Angelic discourse.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 16-17.

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I have not heard for some time of Mr. Leigh Hunt; the last was that his health was not good, and that may account for his not having written to me;—though I rather imagine there is something in the English atmosphere adverse to letter-writing, for I find all my friends there, except one, most infamous in their correspondence.

So, you are mightily occupied,—and that's a good thing; and I am mightily idle,—and perhaps that's a better. Every man to his taste. Mr. L. H. put me out of conceit of my Bianca Cappello, and so I cut her. At last I've discovered he was in the wrong, and so I've a will to be at her again; and so I've procured a letter to a learned Abbate, who is to overwhelm me with historical facts; and so, I suppose, I shall not be able to breathe under them; and so I shall be so-so again.

Have you read Lord Normanby's Novel, "Matilda, a tale of the day?" Colburn has given him £700 for it! There is not much stuff in the novel, but it is written with a sort of vivacious ease and cleverness, with now and then an admirable bit,—but I can't tell why it is worth that sum of money,—Colburn can, no doubt.³⁵

Hogg, too, is a lively correspondent, as a short note and a long letter show.

Temple Saty.

Dear Roman Citizen,

I have been coming to see you every evening, but, unless a day be fixed, Procrastination & Perendination are sure to win the day, the morrow & the day after, & 209 + days after that.

I will not fail on Wednesday; it is the day of Mercury & of lawyers.

Your's truly
300960 Minutes³⁶

³⁵ *Ibid.*, ff. 18–19.

³⁶ d. 9, ff. 364–65.

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יִרְדֵּךְ פִּינַח כָּל־מַלְכֵי־אֶרֶץ

בִּי־שִׁמְעוּ אִמְרֵי־פִיךָ³⁷

πὼς γάρ σ' ὑμνήσω, πάντως εὐῦμνον ἔοντα;

Nunc te, *Finche*, canam, necnon sylvestria tecum
Virgulta—

How shall I sufficiently praise you, O too laudable Finch, it is plain that the dead languages are too stale & flat, they will not do it, & the vernacular, w^{ch} we sometimes use, is so vulgar, I will not attempt it; nor can I attempt in any tongue, w^{ch} I know, to apologize for not having written to you before, & I think that there are some inconveniences also in writing in a language, that is unknown, at least on a delicate subject, I will not therefore offer excuses of any kind. I have sometimes inquired after you, & save a few ordinary accidents, I have heard commonly & to my great satisfaction, a favourable account. I heard, that your goods & chattels sunk, but that the Nereids restored them uninjured, except the finery of the ladies, & as fine feathers make a fine bird, I shed many tears for their loss. I heard, that as a patent dies with a king here, so in other places a bull expires with the βουκόλος, & that your books were accordingly subjected to the restraint of princes, but that you raised a storm, that wo^d have revived the bull Apis himself, & they were liberated. I heard, that you are the tenant of the King of Prussia, I doubt not that he is aware, that such a tenant, even altho' he pay no rent, is the brightest jewel in his crown. I heard, that you had hurt your leg, but that it is quite well again. I heard, that you had learned by experience last winter, that a man may be cold in Rome in cold weather, this I thought was a paradox; & I heard, w^{ch} seemed probable enough, that when the snow melted, you suddenly found yourself reposing on a bank of oranges & lemons under the shade of spreading violets, "*necnon syl-*

³⁷ Ps. 138.4, with a transliteration of *Finch* substituted for "O Jehovah." Hogg's use of points is not always correct.

vestria tecum Virgulta." The virtuous Webster, who told me about the '*Virgulta*,' kindly invited me to dine with him, & I heard lately in Judd Place many estimable persons speaking of you, at least as far as language wo^d enable them, just as you ought to be spoken of, amongst them, himself a host, altho' at another man's table, was Dr. Charles Burney, ἰσόθεος φῶς; he desired me to remember him "most affectionately" to you, & he said nothing co^d console him for your absence, but the number of untoward accidents, that continually befel you, w^{ch} were a just punishment, for living abroad, remote from your friends, wilfully & needlessly; I accept this noble sentiment, & deem it to be worthy of a great & a good man, & *affectionately* I hope, that unless you are soon to be hanged, you may speedily break your neck. I heard, that you have got a fine *Julio Romano* & are going to have it engraved; it is not necessary to come all the way to Rome to learn, that he is a wonderful painter; the traveller may get out at Mantua & now this subject has, at last, brought me to myself. I regret, I need not say how sincerely, that I cannot afford to subscribe; I am horribly, unutterably, abominably & most undeservedly poor: perhaps six years hence, when it is completed, I may be able to buy a copy, I say *perhaps*, for you know, that the Common Law is a most unjust stepmother, especially to those, who aim highly & honorably at the highest, never giving a morsel of bread till the teeth are quite gone: mine alas! are all sound &, miserable man! I never even have the tooth-ache. Nor have I as yet found the Civil Law more kind; the Council of the London University promised me three years ago to elect me immediately professor of Civil Law, & after causing me infinite toil, loss & expence, they have treated me, li[ke ? seal] & better men, very shamefully, or shamelessly. I have had [? seal] of the great Justinian of late, that I ought to have address [ed] [? seal] "*Ut ait. gl. 6. quaest. j. c. si quis g. de cons. dis. v. c. j fin. et est* [?" seal] &c., like *Bridoye* in Rabelais. To make the pot boil therefore I have had re-

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course to the more humane letters, & I have written, I think, at least half of half the periodicals published in England & Scotland. I have just corrected the proofs of an article, full of excellent learning, a wonderful specimen of &c., &c., &c., about Niebuhr's Roman History; I know not how the former occupier of your message will like the manner, in w^{ch} I have spoken of his inordinate pretensions; the Edinburgh Review of course reaches Rome; read it, & give me your opinion. A man does not grow rich however by selling these bunches of carrots: you know how a *Graeculus esuriens* is paid for going up into heaven, when he is bid, & writing *de omni scibile*. I am glad the good old practice is revived of making Englishmen Cardinals: I shall be the next, I will come & live amongst you then, & will make you lead holy lives. I was surprised you were not chosen to fill a certain vacancy, I expected to have heard from you *sub annulo Piscatoris*, bidding me address you, as Peter the 2^d.

How I long to have another look at Rome! Remember me to all my friends, to the Patriarch of the Maronites, to *San Bruno*, to the worthy citizen of Dordt, & to the estimable young Duke; I retain a lively sense of the kindness of M. Kestner & if you meet with the lofty virtue of Landor, commend me to it; remember me especially to Mrs. Finch, & humbly, on bended knees & with downcast eyes, offer the homage of my poor duty to Miss Thompson. The sacred college torment you, no doubt, with enquiries after my health, tell the fellows shortly, that I am well; it is necessary to keep impertinent people at a distance. Pray write to me soon. God bless you, my excellent Finch; may you number the years of Peter, twice told & a few scores over.

Yours ever faithfully,

London 20th April 1830.

T. J. Hogg ³⁸

1 Garden Court
Temple

³⁸ d. 9, ff. 362-63.

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Two letters from Hunt have points of interest. Unfortunately the silhouettes mentioned in the first one are not to be found among Finch's letters or pictures. It may be that he set too little value on them.

Santa Croce—29. Sept.

Dear Sir,

Thornton, not being Mr. Sgricci or Mr. Finch, says he cannot muster up any verses on demand, so he begs your acceptance of an old tatterdemalion of a print, which he flatters himself will do almost as ill. It is Voltaire however, and has a sort of genuine look with it. Pray admire the legs & shoes.—With Voltaire come a few prints of the Edgeworth & Darwin coterie, your fugitive Jeremy, and (what, you must know, I must have you set a little value on) three or four profiles which Mrs. H. has found in her desk, & which are as like as they can stare. They are her own cutting. Little Barthelemon, the violin-player, must be looking for his head in the other world, to this day; for here it is; & Godwin & Lancaster (the school-man) are no less certainly decapitated. I am not sure that Coleridge is so like; but Mrs. Hunt vows he he [*sic*] is. The Story of Rimini accompanies them; & for a farce after the tragedy, is Peter Pindar with Bozzy and Piozzi. There is also an opera.—Best compliments to the ladies.

Yours very truly

To R. Finch Esq^{re}

Leigh Hunt ³⁹

Maiano—April 20. 1824.

Dear Sir,

I snatch a moment's leisure to apologize to you once more for not answering your letter, and to beg you furthermore to retain your kind opinion of me notwithstanding the brevity with which I write now. If you knew all the sickness & anxiety I have gone through in the mean time, you

³⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 417–19.

would rather wonder that I could write at all; and by way of prop & encouragement, I have now got a leg with such pains in it, as make me wish it cut off a hundred times a day. Dr. Down tells me it is a sciatica. It is too bad of Fortune, I must say; for I have been an exemplary peripatetic all the winter, in spite of being obliged to walk alone. But I suppose it is in payment of some old scores of neglect that way, and I endeavour to turn it to account by writing panegyricks on exercise in the Wishing-Cap, which you must know is a new series of articles I have set up in the Examiner. Necessity, besides being the mother of invention, has a great many other children not so remarkable for their talents, & among them are articles in newspapers. I dare say I have written to the amount of a good thick volume since I saw you, besides a pamphlet not published, and the translation of Redi with a pack of notes to it. I expect to hear of the publication of this every day. How goes on the Principe? And how are the Principesse, to wit, the ladies? Pray make my best remembrances, & tell them I have often longed to take a stroll and a pastoral dinner with them, as at Pratolino, about some picturesque place in the neighbourhood of Rome, banditti and weather *volentibus*. Dr. Down says he has not known such bad weather in Florence ever since he has been a resident, and as he is not "the oldest man," he may be safely believed. Florence is your place for "March winds & April showers;" they come with a vengeance,—to say nothing of winter fogs. Above the winter fogs, we here, at Maiano, used to sit like the gods, & look down with pity upon the sea of mist that overwhelmed Florence; but the winds & the rain remind us that we are mortal. The long spell of sunshine, which they promise us, will be as "welcome as the flowers in May," or more so indeed, for the flowers have mocked us these six weeks. I intend to bask & renew my life in it, like a proper battered son of Phoebus. Mrs. Hunt, thank God, though not *rid* of her old complaint, has gone on miraculously. She begs her compliments to all. We have to thank you for cracking

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some hard nouns & verbs for us with John, which has been a great help to his progress. I wish he went on in everything as well as he does with his book, but his journey to Rome unquestionably did him great service, & we hope more & more for the best. The children are all well. Thornton gets on capitally with his Virgil, & has been bitten by some Moliere I read to him into writing a farce, in which he introduces "24 fat doctors all rolling down stairs one after the other in cadence to music, with grunts of grief." This, you will see, is farcical enough, if it is nothing else; so what with my love of farce, & my being the author's father, I laughed as heartily as he could wish.—I wish I could send you any news; but we live so entirely out of the world that it is impossible. My news would be old to any body who lives in a city. As you have had a jubilee however in Rome, so are we going to have one here at Maiano, for Mr. Brown is coming; and a new regiment of hussars in a country town could not have a sound with it, to us recluses, more gay & multitudinous.

Believe me, dear Sir, yours very truly,
Leigh Hunt⁴⁰

To R. Finch Esq^{re} &c. &c.

Selections from three of Henry Crabb Robinson's letters may fittingly close this account of Robert Finch. Written in the last year of Finch's life, they are part of the record of one of his latest friendships. They reveal something of the mode of life of the Finches and their circle in Florence and Rome. Also they serve as footnotes to Robinson's *Reminiscences*.

My dear Sir

I am unwilling that a packet should be dispatched to our friend Götzenberger without it's inclosing a few lines to you, tho' they will contain little beyond the expression of my sense of your great kindness to me; The pleasure I have

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 422–24.

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had in your society and house, and the permission you have given me to look forward to a continuance of your obliging attentions constitute the strongest of the ties which now bind me in affection to the holy city.—And I trust that my return will be early enough in the Autumn to enable me to remind you of your challenge to engage in an excursion among the mountains— During the hot months, I should not dare to be your companion.

I am so charmed with this delicious country that if I find I can but obtain the means of studying the language here I shall perhaps even remain here [in Naples]. My only letter of introduction has made me acquainted with a German who promises to introduce me into a family where pure Italian is spoken, And he has in his own house Conversazioni every evening— And in Italian only— And if I stay in my present lodgings they present attractions such as few dwellings can offer— I occupy a 4th piano in Santa Lucia— I have a terrace walk which gives me a view of the whole bay. I see Vesuvius without lifting my head from my pillow And am awakened by the rays of the rising Sun And the rest of the day my terrace is in Shade!!!

Our journey was most pleasant—glorious weather— Even the pontine marshes were delightful— We enjoyed the scenery at Velletri— We ascended the heights [*sic*] at Terracina & walked on the ruins of Theodoric's palace—

Here we have lost no time— Westphal took us a most delightful journey— We drove to Fusara, walked to Cuma & Baia and after seeing all the wonders of the Phlaegrean fields which as I have since found excited in Forsyth the same sensations they produced in me—for like him I was pained at the profanation of great names— And when I looked with mortification on Avernus and Acheron and the Styx I parodied Wordsworth & exclaimed—"I had a vision of my own, Ah! Why did I undo it?" However recovering from this shock to my schoolboy recollections, I enjoyed our row to Ischia—our residence at Don Thomassios— Our ride on Ass-back up to the summit of the Mountain

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next day— And our row back to Pozzuola next day Our walk by Cynano and thro the Poplippo grotto terminated two of the most delighted days of my life

Tomorrow we all set out for Paestum— Meaning to be away three days And in about a fortnight probably shall embark for Sicily— — —

As I said before all beyond I leave to the chapter of accidents

• • •

I beg my grateful Comps to the whole household

And remain Your obliged friend and hble Serv^t

H. C. Robinson

Naples 23^d March 1830—

Mr. Richmond desires me to add his Comps: ⁴¹

Florence 24th July 1830.

My dear Sir.

I have delayd [*sic*] writing to you that I might be able to report to you the immediate and direct results of your valuable introductions— I cannot do so to my satisfaction today, but I can no longer resist the desire to converse with you.

On my arrival at Sienna I found my American already settled in very comfortable lodgings And apartments provisionally engaged for me, which I consented to occupy for a week— I should have been fixed there permanently, but for your letters— These served as an Amulet which enabled me to resist all the seductions and encounter all the threats by which I was assailed— I could have been very happy there certainly— A *cool* residence I feel now to be no slight advantage— There was a good public library— a reading room— And a sufficient variety of company with a promise of immediate introduction to the best Italian conversazioni— There was your acquaintance Prof: Grotanelli—a very scientific man they tell me—to me he was very

⁴¹ d. 14, ff. 171–72.

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friendly— A polyhistor—half german half italian A Mr Montrecci Several Irish families with whom you are acquainted— A Mrs. Smyth from Antrim Co: in particular pleased me much— These were the attractions— And then the warnings against Florence— It would be tempting providence to rush into a furnace— The Zanzari would suck out all the moisture that the Sun had not dried up already And one's bones would be calcined in a week— In spite of all this— Under the protection of the aforesaid amulet I effected my escape And on the 15th arrived here— Your letter secured me a most kind reception. You did not say a syllable too much in praise of these ladies— Nothing can exceed their attention to me And yet at the same time there is no officiousness nothing intrusive about them— I have very spacious & airy apartments— And every comfort the Season permits— It IS HOT I must own— $29\frac{1}{2}$ degrees of Reaumur in the shade certainly justify the declamations of the good *Sanese*, but thanks to those same declamations I had wrought myself up to such a resolution that I would not mind the heat,—that in fact I do not— I am as comfortable in that respect as can be—it is true that the Zanzari have not yet made their appearance I can not tell how it will be then— The Zanzareria seems an effectual remedy But will not that be like dying of the Doctor? I dine with my padrone And spend two hours with them in the Evening— A Mr. Pieri sometimes there And always Niccolini— It would be impertinent in me to offer a judgment of him to you— As you know him— But there is one great drawback on what would otherwise be the great pleasure of his company—he is the worst speaker of Italian I ever heard— His Italian probably is of the very best— It is incomprehensible how so distinguished a man—The Secretary of one learned Academy—An officer in the very Della Crusca itself And in the first line of literati should not have learned to open his lips & let out his words with decorum— They are sent out helter skelter like boys out of school— I cannot, as the Viennese do, cry out every mo-

ment was schaffien sie? So am content to conceal my want of comprehension by trying to look wise— Sometimes I give a look of despair to the ladies— And one of them repeats to me— After all, this is but a trifle— At my age it is too late to care about learning refined pronuntiation [*sic*]— If I did, Florence would not be the place—

I deliverd your letter to Mr. Viessieux—he received me very politely—but owing to a little misunderstanding and a little shyness on my part (a foible I believe you had not given me credit for) it was not till yesterday that I attended his evening party— Tho' I had a very imperfect enjoyment of it, yet it will be a source of great pleasure & profit to me. I was introduced to *Capei* yesterday— I like him much— Unluckily in the earnestness of conversation finding I could not express myself in Italian, I talked French he answered in French And that became *our* language— I will avoid this with others—if possible— There were some eight or ten others there all of the right sort— One man especially pleased me—his animated tone & looks and even the clearness of his voice renderd his conversation peculiarly agreeable— This was *Georgani*— I shall immediately look into his prose writings.

As I shun the English at the Gab: Lit: I have plenty of time for reading— I have been reading Pecchio's Hist: of the Italian Economists which you praised so warmly, with great delight— You will be glad to hear, if ignorant of the fact, that he is living quite at his ease in England being well married I have just finished *Nabucco* A bold attempt; but I think the execution not quite successful tho' it has great beauties.—Was not this the book concerning which you told me an interestg [*sic*] anecdote of the Austrian-Minister and the J: [G?] D: of Tuscany? But I cannot possibly confine my thoughts to Italian literature— The daily papers will have their daily attention— The *French* especially. The result of the elections is such as to excite most anxious alarms— Will the Liberals use their victory with moderation? Will the court yield before it is too late?

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Or will the tremendous attempt be made to reign despotically in defiance of the charters and laws? If it comes to a conflict, the result must be lamentable at all events—⁴²

My dear Sir—

As you take an interest, kindly, in my literary attainments I send you a specimen of my talents in prose translation from the Italian. The original is a M: S: now lying on the table of the Gabinetto Litterario.

By a dispatch from our minister just received we learn the following

After three days of grape-shot [metraglia] in all the streets of Paris, the Thuilleries and the Louvre have been taken by storm [presi d'assalto] and the three coloured flag is flying on the Thuilleries

The Swiss-troops have been disarmed

Gerard commands the troops of the line

The National guards have been reestablished and are under the command of la Fayette

Del Rè non se ne parla.

A provisional government composed of the Deputies of Paris is now in the exercise of authority.

The chambers are convened for the 3^d of August.

I might have hesitated selecting this for my first literary effort, but your friend Mr. Capei (who desires his Compliments to you and Mr. Mayer) has himself read the Journal des Debats of the 30th And another paper of the 29th which contain substantially the same news. As the circulation of the journals will probably be stopped, you may for several days have no means of judging of the correctness of my translation—

Hermit as you call yourself, and preferring as you do, old poetry to new politics, you will perhaps be half angry with me for interrupting your studies— I prophecy that

⁴² *Ibid.*, ff. 177-78.

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like the unfortunate Fransesco [*sic*] you will “read no more that day—” The simile by the bye does not run on all fours—

Now if I were wise I should throw down my pen and write no more—for the chance is that you will hardly attend to any idle words I may write on any other subject—Indeed I have for the last three days been sadly beat out of my Italian—I returned on the Eveng of the 4th from a delightful excursion to Vallombrosa—A fine spot, but not in any respect the Vallombrosa—of Milton—for there are no *brooks* nor do the trees “high over arched embower” I came back however full of idyllic feelings—And on my arrival learned the news of the day

It was impossible not to foresee that the consequences of such a measure must be of infinite importance, tho’ *what* those consequences would be I was not, nor am now prophet enough to predict—

. . . I have been very happy during the last three weeks—With only one draw-back on my pleasures—A growing apprehension that it was foolish to attempt at my age the learning a new language and, what is more, a new literature—My consolation is that to a man who is able to restrain his curiosity within bounds, and confine himself to the few master minds which at distant periods have illuminated their age & country—The literature of every country lies within a narrow compass—The foreigner who

Shakespear	Milton Swift	}	and Burke will
& Bacon	&		
	Pope		

have a sufficient idea of the English intellect at the great epocha of its cultivation *Voltaire* alone as Göthe says comprehends the whole extent of French mind—Göthe alone will sufficiently compensate for the study of the German and Cervantes for that of the Spanish—I suspect too that in like manner Italian genius will be found in the works of a very small number of transcendent minds—I know not whether there be—I suspect there is not a third

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entitled to rank with Dante and Macchiavelli— I am now earnestly studying the great philosopher— I am sorry to say that I cannot concur in the fashionable interpretation given to the *Principe*— Very desirous to be convinced that I am in error I at present believe M: to have been a man of immense intellect but a corrupt scoundrel, I believe that his P: was written not for the public but for the private eye and ear of Lorenzo—into whose service he wanted to be taken— It is painful to believe—but he must be blind who has never seen an entire separation of intellectual power from moral worth— A man may delight in the exposure of all the folly which is found in combination with tyranny of every kind who would have been gladly the tool of the same tyranny— Our *Mandeville* I suspect to have been of this stamp— Diderot was certainly a bad fellow Few like our Milton have combined in himself [*sic*] all worth— I am now reading the history of Florence— It does not change the impression produced on my mind by the *Principe* . . .

[Top of page 2] It is very like a boarding-school miss thus writing in corners but I left a space I am now willing to fill up— . . .

Mr. Durnal & his lady desire their Comps to you and the ladies.— To the Ladies—to Mr. Mayer—To the few visitors who recollect & speak of me—in due gradation

My remembrances

Your obliged friend H.C.R.⁴³

⁴³ *Ibid.*, ff. 179–80.

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
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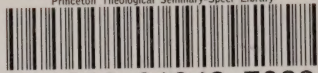
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